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THE NEW YORKER

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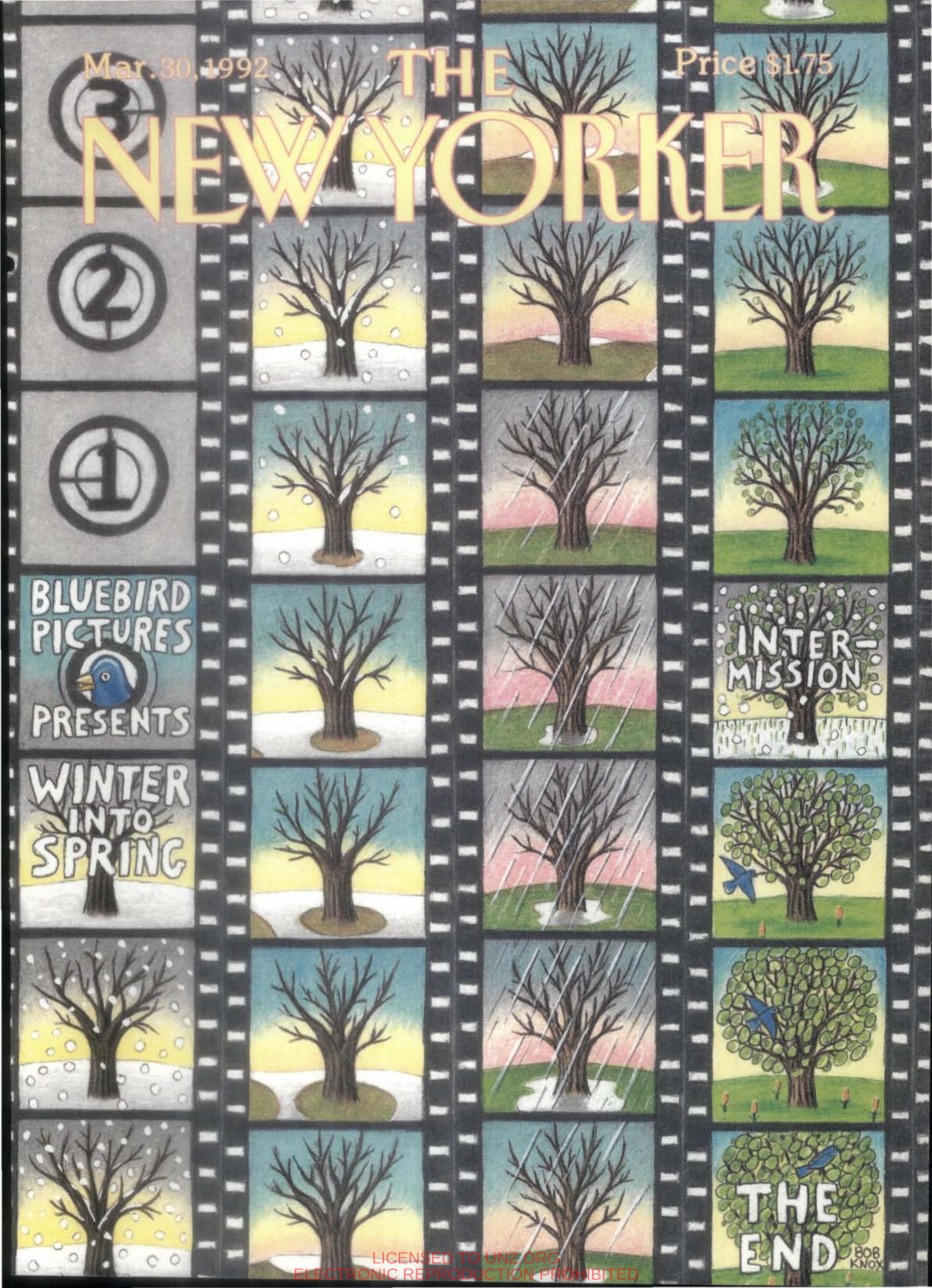
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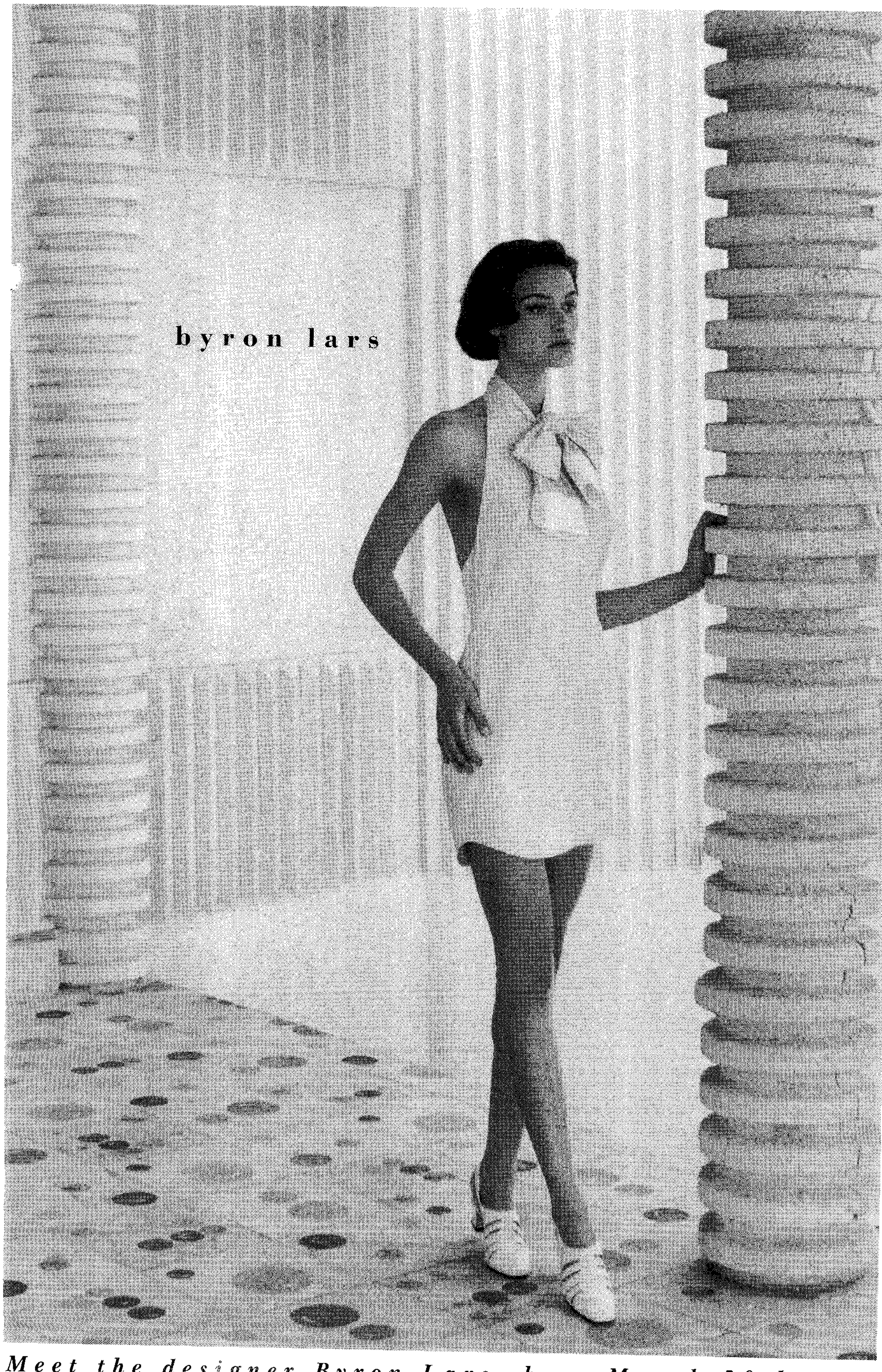

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

MARCH 30, 1992

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN 4

THE TALK OF THE TOWN 29

"SLEEP" . . . . *Haruki Murakami* 34

"GOLD LILY" (POEM) . . . . *Louise Glück* 36

"WITHERED COMPLIMENTS" (POEM) . . . . *John Ashbery* 44

PROFILES (ELIOT FISK) . . . . *Kennedy Fraser* 56

MUSICAL EVENTS . . . . *Andrew Porter* 66

THE THEATRE . . . . *Edith Oliver, Mimi Kramer* 69

LETTER FROM WASHINGTON . . . . *Elizabeth Drew* 70

REFLECTIONS (ALFRED CHESTER'S WIG) . . . . *Cynthia Ozick* 79

COVER: *Bob Knox*

DRAWINGS: *Robert Mankoff, Henry Martin, Lee Lorenz, Peter Steiner, Donald Reilly, Dana Fradon, Danny Shanahan, Eldon Dedini, Arnie Levin, J. B. Handelsman, Victoria Roberts, Roz Chast, Glen Baxter, Michael Maslin, Edward Collet, Charles Barsotti, Bruce Eric Kaplan, Gahan Wilson, Warren Miller, Mick Stevens, Leo Cullum*

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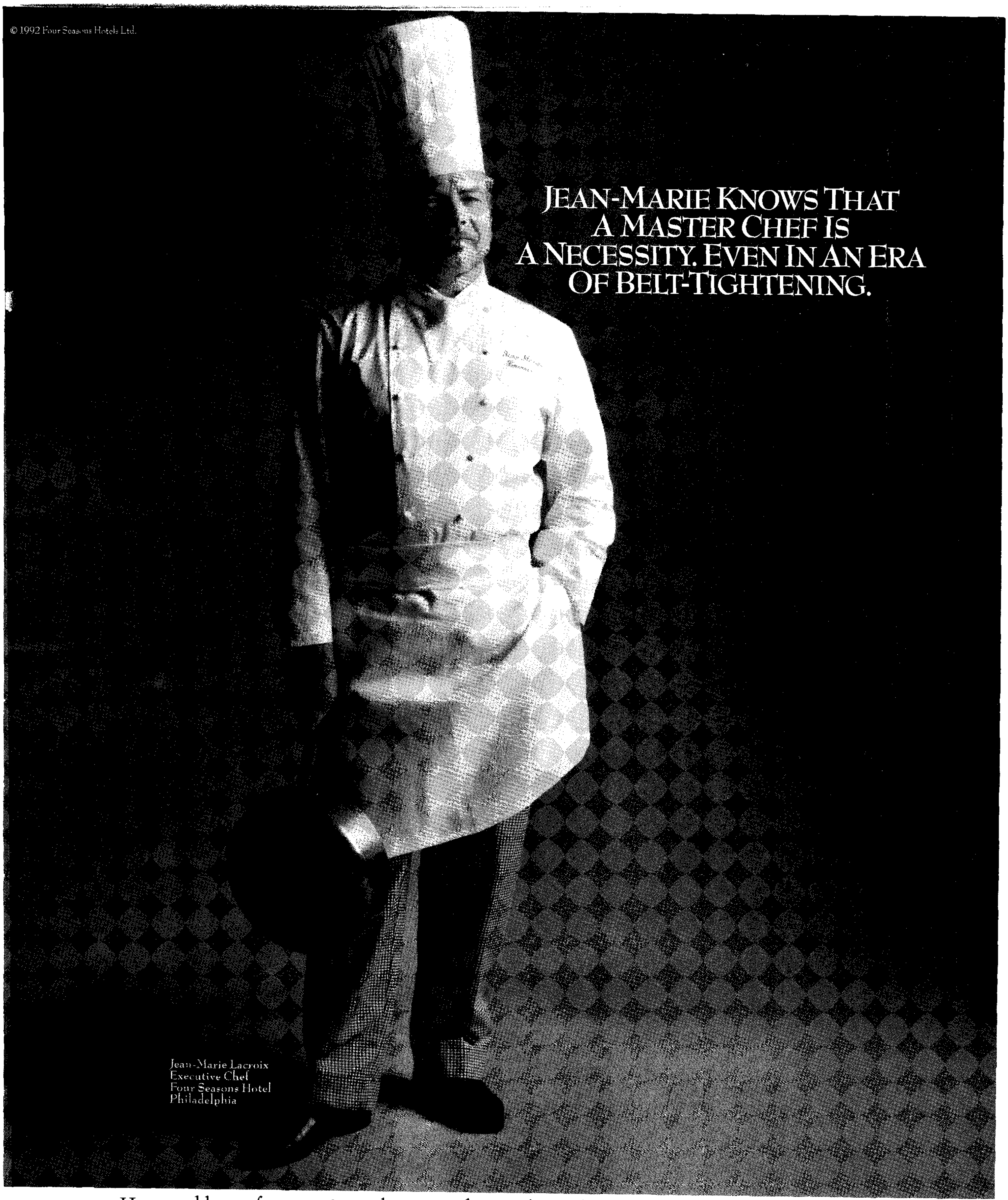
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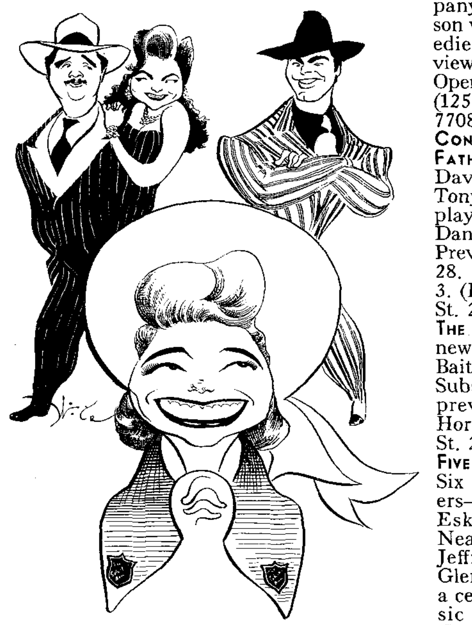
GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

BACK when we were sixteen, we used to frequent a nightly ballet class at Pete Conlow's studio, in Philadelphia. One of the things we liked most about that class was the chance to watch Howard Perloff jump. Mr. Perloff was a young, compact, barrel-chested guy whose calling was music (he was a sax student at Juilliard) but whose aspiration was to throw himself into any kind of activity that one could house in a theatre and legally charge admission for. When we say "throw," we mean throw. He used to light into a grand jeté like a ground missile, and his cruising altitude was so high that you probably could have bounced radio signals off him. The fact that he had no natural stretch, and therefore no classical line to speak of, or that his jump never landed on the music, was really beside the point. He had appetite, and he had guts, and isn't that what the theatre's all *about?*

Now, after a quarter of a century, we find that Mr. Perloff has sailed back into our sight line as the writer, director, and producer of "Bernie's Bar Mitzvah," at the 24 Karat Club. "Bernie's" is one of those audience-participation shows. You drink (at an open bar), you eat (chopped liver, corned beef, Rock Cornish hen), you dance (to the music of Tony Richards and his orchestra), and you bear witness to how the stresses of such an occasion turn Bernie, Bernie's family, his friends, and his rabbi from placid suburbanites into wild-eyed practitioners of the seven deadly sins. The only thing you don't get to do is attend the bar mitzvah itself. "I thought about doing the ceremony, but that might have offended people," Mr. Perloff told us during a recent chat. "So I went directly to the party."

And Mr. Perloff knows from bar-mitzvah parties. As the leader of his own band for twenty years, Mr. Perloff estimates that he has played at over a thousand bar mitzvahs, in New York, Baltimore, and his native Philadelphia. "My own bar mitzvah also had something of this show," he said. "So did the bar mitzvahs of my two sons. I spent too much money—and I would do it all over again." Audiences for "Bernie's" will know what he means: tickets run between sixty-five and eighty-five dollars each.



Nathan Lane, Faith Prince, Carolyn Mignini, and Peter Gallagher in "Guys and Dolls"

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29	30	31	1			

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

The Best of Forbidden Broadway—A tenth-anniversary edition of Gerard Alessandrini's show, featuring both past highlights and new material. In previews. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

Blue Hill Troupe—Presenting benefit performances of Gilbert and Sullivan's **RUDDYGORE.** Opens March 30 at 8, and runs through April 4. (John Jay College Theatre, 899 Tenth Ave., at 58th St. For information about tickets, call 879-3135.)

Chekhov Very Funny—The Pearl Theatre Company winds up its season with four short comedies by Chekhov. Previews through March 28. Opens March 29 at 7. (125 W. 22nd St. 645-7708.)

Conversations with My Father—Judd Hirsch, David Margulies, and Tony Shalhoub in a new play by Herb Gardner. Daniel Sullivan directed. Previews through March 28. Opens March 29 at 3. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The End of the Day—A new play by Jon Robin Baitz, the author of "The Substance of Fire." In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Five Guys Named Moe—Six singers and dancers—Jerry Dixon, Doug Eskew, Milton Craig Nealy, Kevin Ramsey, Jeffrey D. Sams, and Glenn Turner—star in a celebration of the music of Louis Jordan. Written by Clarke Peters, this show originated in London, where it is still playing the West End. In previews. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

Guys and Dolls—Jerry Zaks has directed this new production of the 1950 musical by Frank Loesser (score and lyrics) and Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows (book). (It was based on a Damon Runyon story.) Peter Gallagher, Nathan Lane, Carolyn Mignini, and Faith Prince lead a forty-member cast. In previews. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Hamlet—Stephen Lang has the title role and Elizabeth McGovern is Ophelia in this Roundabout Theatre Company production. Paul Weidner directed. In previews. (Criterion Center, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Jake's Women—Alan Alda stars in a new play by Neil Simon, which Gene Saks directed. Preview on March 23. Opens March 24 at 6:30. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Jelly's Last Jam—Gregory Hines has the lead in a new musical about Jelly Roll Morton. George C. Wolfe directed and authored the book. Previews begin March 28. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

Lypsinka! A Day in the Life—A new show written and performed by John Epperson. Presented by New York Theatre Workshop. Previews through March 29. Opens March 31 at 8. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 302-6989.)

Metro—A musical import from Warsaw, which features a cast of forty-one dancers and singers. Janusz Stoklosa composed the score. Mary Bracken Phillips has provided English-language lyrics and book (in collaboration with Janusz Jozefowicz) for this production. Previews begin March 26. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

The Oxcart—The Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary with a revival of René Marqués's drama, which was the company's first production, in 1967. Three performances a week are in English; four are in Spanish. Preview on March 25. Opens March 26 at 8. (304 W. 47th St. 354-1293.)

Ruthless!—A musical comedy about a child star, who is played by Tina Denmark. The book and lyrics are by Joel Paley and the music is by Marvin Laird. In previews. (Players, 115 Macdougal St. 254-5076.)

A Snake in the Vein—A play by Alan Bowne. Previews March 27-29. Opens March 30 at 7. (Manhattan Class Company, 120 W. 28 St. 727-7722.)

A Streetcar Named Desire—A revival of Tennessee Williams' classic 1947 play. Jessica Lange is Blanche, Alec Baldwin is Stanley, Amy Madigan is Stella, and Timothy Carhart is Mitch. Directed by Gregory Mosher. In previews. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

'Tis Pity She's a Whore—Val Kilmer and Jeanne Tripplehorn in a production of John Ford's Jacobean tragedy, which JoAnne Akalaitis directed. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

The Virgin Molly—A play by Quincy Long. Preview on March 24. Opens March 25 at 8, and runs through April 12. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 645-8755.)

NEW THIS SEASON

And—Ron Silver stars in a play by Roger Rosenblatt. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074. Closes March 29.)

Beau Jest—A comedy by James Sherman. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

The Bells; or, the Polish Jew—Everett Quinton has adapted an adaptation of a hundred-and-twenty-year-old "dramatic study." He also plays all the roles. Eureka directed. (Charles Ludlam, 1 Sheridan Sq. 691-2271.)

Bernie's Bar Mitzvah—Written and directed by Howard Perloff, this you-are-part-of-the-show show includes an array of food (complete with a Viennese table) in the ticket price. Ian Bonds plays Bernie. (24 Karat Club, 327 W. 44th St. 1-800 231-8607.)

Catskills on Broadway—A festival of ethnicity and all but unbroken laughter. Freddie Roman and Mal Z. Lawrence are the Jewish comedians; Dick Capri handles the Italians. The jokes explode around us, and there isn't a dud in the lot. Marilyn Michaels, the fourth member of the company, does imitations of imitations. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/23/91.) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Chess—Tim Rice has revised the book and lyrics for this revival of the musical, which has a score by Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus. (Master, Riverside Dr. at 103rd St. 663-8893.)

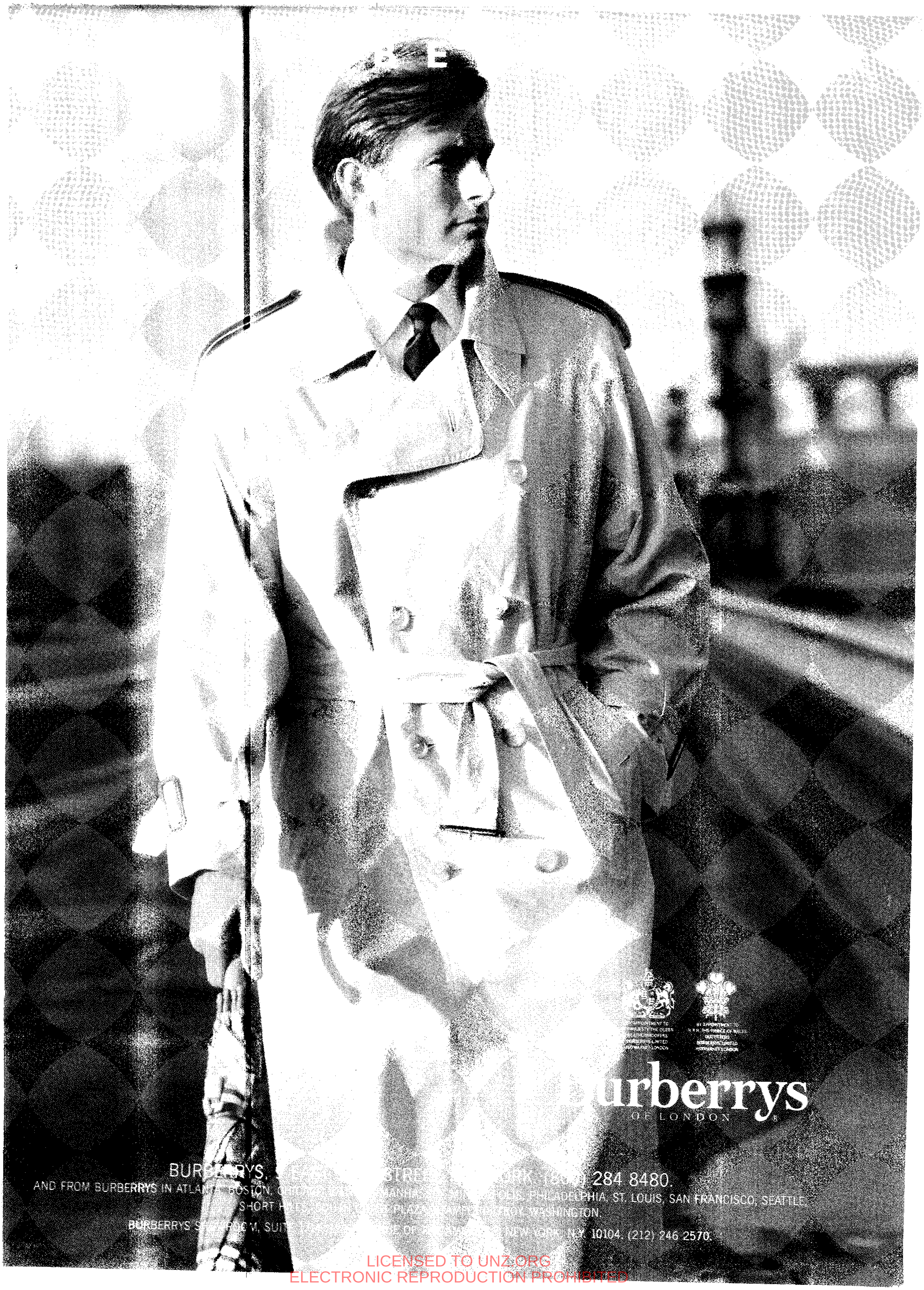
Crazy for You—Lightly based on "Girl Crazy," which opened in 1930, this glorious show is actually a celebration of the music of George Gershwin and the lyrics of his brother Ira—nineteen songs in all—and also of the witty, imaginative choreography of Susan Stroman. Ken Ludwig wrote the lively book. Harry Groener and Jodi Benson are the lead actor/dancers. The scenery is by Robin Wagner; the costumes are by William Ivey Long; and the masterly direction is by Mike Ockrent. Bless 'em all. (3/2/92) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Dancing at Lughnasa—How you respond to Brian Friel's wistful autobiographical play depends a good deal on your personality and preoccupations. Either you will find it lovely and lyrical or it will strike you as the memory play from Hell. (11/4/91) (Plymouth, 236 W 45th St. 239-6200.)

Death and the Maiden—A drama by the Chilean playwright Ariel Dorfman, which stars Glenn Close, Richard Dreyfuss, and Gene Hackman. Mike Nichols directed. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 719-4099.)

Down the Flats—A play by Tony Kavanagh which is set in Dublin. (Irish Arts Center 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318.)

First Is Supper—The American Jewish Theatre presents a play by the comedian Shelley Berman. (Susan Bloch, 307 W. 26th St. 633 9797. Closes March 29.)



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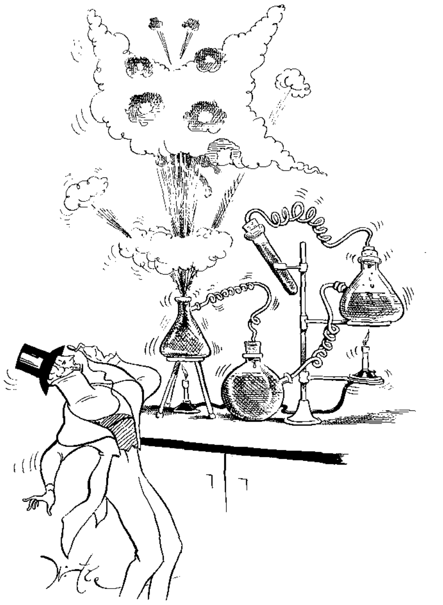

Four Baboons Adoring the Sun—Stockard Channing and James Naughton lead the cast of a play by John Guare. Directed by Peter Hall. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

From the Mississippi Delta—In eleven scenes, Endesha Ida Mae Holland dramatizes her own rise (and journey) from the Delta (where she had been a teen-age prostitute) to the University of Minnesota and triumph in academia. The leading character, though, is her mother, a midwife called Aint Baby, who is very well portrayed by Cheryl Lynn Bruce. The role of the author is split between Ms. Bruce, Sybil Walker, and Jacqueline Williams, and the result is a lively and merry evening. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

Get Used to It—A new gay musical by Tom Wilson Weinberg. (Courtyard Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 869-3530.)

Grandchild of Kings—Harold Prince's enthralling adaptation of the first two volumes of Sean O'Casey's memoirs is set—beautifully—by Eugene Lee in a square in Dublin. The performances, all of them satisfying, are by the members of the Irish Repertory Theatre Company; Padraic Moyles, Patrick Fitzgerald, and Chris O'Neill are Sean as child, young man, and old man, and the invaluable Pauline Flanagan is Sean's mother. Traditional Irish songs and dances accompany the action every inch of the way. (2/24/92) (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 477-7900.)

Homo Sapien Shuffle—A play written and directed by Richard Caliban. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Closes March 29.)

Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother—An adaptation of a novella by Gabriel García Márquez; directed by Jorge Alí Triana. Performed in Spanish; simultaneous-English-translation sets are available. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850.)

Jean Cocteau Repertory—Presenting, in rotating repertory, Friedrich Schiller's **MARY STUART** and Samuel Beckett's **ENDGAME.** (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Julie Halston's Lifetime of Comedy—For up-to-the-minute coverage of what it is like to be "divorced, over thirty, hormonally imbalanced," you can't do better than the wit and wisdom of this multitalented actress-comedienne-sage. She's a little like Joan Rivers, a little like Joan Collins, and a little like St. Joan. Also a little like ZaSu Pitts. Among our favorite moments in this autobiographical show are the story of events leading up to Miss Halston's tragic divorce, the visit to the breast doctor, and the ritual reading and textual analysis of the *Times* wedding announcements. (Actors Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 691-6226.)

The Lady from Havana—An encore presentation of a play by Max Ferra about a Cuban family in Miami. Three performances a week are in English; three are in Spanish. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 869-3530.)

Lotto (Experience the Dream)—Cliff Roquemore's comedy about a Los Angeles family who wins the lottery. Earl Fields, Jr., heads a twelve-member cast. (Heckscher, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. 369-6500.)

The Master Builder—The National Actors Theatre production of Ibsen's play. With Earle Hyman, Lynn Redgrave, Maryann Plunkett, Madeleine Potter, and others. Tony Randall directed. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Marvin's Room—A play about dying, suffering, and sacrifice in one family, written in a style so frisky as to set the teeth permanently on edge. There is a fine performance by Mark Rosenthal as a smoldering young man. Also with Alice Drummond, Laura Esterman, and Tim Monsion. Scott McPherson is the dramatist, David Petrarca the director. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

The Most Happy Fella—This is one musical we think the world could be without and feel no sorrow. The story of a girl forced to content herself with some old duffer because some other old duffer wanted to teach everyone a lesson about making do with what life has to offer, it's pseudo opera superimposed on pseudo Americana. As for Gerald Gutierrez's Goodspeed Opera production, it's your basic slightly-better-than-average dinner-theatre revival. What's the rumpus? (2/24/92) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Opal—A new musical by Robert Nassif Lindsey, presented by the Lamb's Theatre Company. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

The Real Live Brady Bunch—Episodes from the acclaimed TV series, reënacted by the Annoyance Theatre, of Chicago. Something called "The Real Live Game Show" comes first. (Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. 475-5120.)

Return to the Forbidden Planet—Robert McCormick and Louis Tucci are appealing in this light-minded entertainment, a patchwork of beloved pop songs stitched together with Shakespeareana. The show, however, has almost nothing to do with the cult movie it is based on, and still less to do with "The Tempest." Written and directed by Bob Carlton, it is more than anything else an occasion to laugh a bit and rock out a lot. Also with Allison Briner. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

Search and Destroy—A labored and heavily ironic play about a young man who reads an inspirational self-help book and resolves to make a movie of it; his quest for the requisite cash, which causes him to sink deeper and deeper into corruption, makes up the plot. All in all, it's an exhausting evening, but the performances, under David Chambers' direction, are good. With Griffin Dunne, as the hapless fellow, and Stephen McHattie and Keith Szarabajka, among others. (3/9/92) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200. Closes April 5.)

Shmulnik's Waltz—Allan Knee's comedy, with music by David Shire. Seen earlier this season at the Jewish Rep. With Steve Routman, Wendy Kaplan, Rob Gomes, Robert Katims, Ilana Levine, and Marilyn Pasekoff. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 967-9077.)

Sight Unseen—Donald Margulies' engrossing new play, which is about an Eric Fischl-type painter who decides to look up an old girlfriend he once treated badly, takes the contemporary art scene to task. Technically, it also plays around with time a good deal, though never sloppily or gratuitously. You end up being affected by a curious kind of resonance—it's earned, not something you've brought with you into the theatre. Performances resume March 26. (2/3/92) (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.)

The Substance of Fire—Jon Robin Baitz's play about an intransigent publisher at odds with his grown children, having moved from Playwrights Horizons, seems stronger than ever in this more formal theatre. The remarkable Ron Rifkin continues in the leading role, and he is ably supported by the members of the original company—Patrick Breen, Maria Tucci, Sarah Jessica Parker, and Jon Tenney. (3/9/92) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Tubes—A performance work by Blue Man Group about art and other matters. (Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.)

York Theatre Company—Presenting a revival of **LITTLE ME,** the 1962 musical comedy by Cy Coleman (score), Carolyn Leigh (lyrics), and Neil Simon (book). With JoAnn Cunningham, Stephen Joseph, Denise LeDonne, Michael O'Steen, and others. (2 E. 90th St. 534-5366.)

LONG RUNS

BREAKING LEGS: The Mafia meets Off Broadway. Philip Bosco and Vincent Gardenia play a pair of mobsters who back a new play in order to win a young dramatist for Gardenia's daughter. Tom Dulack wrote the comedy; John Tillinger directed it. With Larry Storch, Karen Valentine, Ronald Maccone, and Nick Wyman. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.). . . **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.). . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run turns thirty-two in May. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.). . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Stuart Ross's loving tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. Paul Binotto, Jeff Blumenkrantz, Drew Geraci, and Gregory Jbara make up the cast. Musical direction is by Doug Besterman. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.). . . **GRAND HOTEL:** The dazzling imagination of Tommy Tune's direction and choreography and the dazzling scenery by Tony Walton almost make up for the inner vacancy of this show, but not quite. The story and characters are skimpy and the music is undistinguished. Nevertheless, there isn't a boring moment. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 586-6510.). . . **LIPS TOGETHER, TEETH APART:** Two couples share a beach house on Fire Island over the Fourth of July weekend, in Terrence McNally's very funny play about a number of serious matters. With Christine Baranski, Joanne Camp, Jonathan Hadary, and Brian Kerwin; directed by John Tillinger. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782.). . . **LOST IN YONKERS:** There's not one glimmer of honesty or authenticity in this family melodrama by Neil Simon. Set in Yonkers during the Second World War, it's about what happens when a cowering, pathetic man has to leave his two adolescent sons with his intimidating mother for the better part of a year. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.). . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **MISS SAIGON:** Oh, the horror! The horror! (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.). . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.). . . **PAGEANT:** A musical spoof of beauty contests. Book and lyrics by Bill Russell and Frank Kelly and music by Albert Evans. Conceived and directed by Robert Longbottom. (Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 262-3333.). . . **PERFECT CRIME:** A murder mystery by Warren Manzi. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 695-3401.). . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets (by Maria Björnson), everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.). . . **THE SECRET GARDEN:** This lovely musical adaptation of the classic children's story by Frances Hodgson Burnett isn't just a kiddie show. Subtle, charming, intelligent, and wholly literary in its approach to adaptation, it manages both to be faithful to the spirit of the book and to comment on the particular moment in time that produced it. With Daisy Eagan, Howard McGillin, Rebecca Luker, Alison Fraser, and John Cameron Mitchell. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.). . . **SONG OF SINGAPORE:** A musical with a promising concept: turn a Polish veterans' hall into a Singapore night club, circa 1941, and spill murder and mayhem onto the premises. Unfortunately, the lavish settings (by John Lee Beatty) and the musical talent cannot conceal a very thin story and a host of excruciatingly bad jokes. (17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. 228-0844. Closes April 4.). . . **THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES:** The sets by Tony Walton, the direction and choreography by Tommy Tune, the costumes by Willa Kim, and the row upon row of Ziegfeld girls make a feast for the eyes, but the funny bone and heart are neglected. Keith Carradine makes an engaging Rogers, but that is not enough, despite Cy Coleman's pleasant score. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.)

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DANCE

TRY this. Stand with your heels together and your toes pointed outward, in something close to a balletic first position. Then slowly bend your knees until your heels come up off the floor and you find yourself in a deep squat, like a grand plié. Next, lift your body back up halfway, so that your heels are once again on the ground but your knees are still bent. From here you are going to take a step to the side with your right leg—keep those knees bent while you do it—while at the same time sweeping your left foot forward until that left leg is raised in front of you, in a sort of attitude en avant. Now hold the pose for a while—until, say, hell freezes over. You'll want to keep your diaphragm lifted and your shoulders down—that would go for any dancer—and your face should be a picture of radiant calm. After all, you are Shiva Nataraja, patron god of Bharata Natyam, the ancient classical dance form of South India, and you are performing the dance of bliss. Did we mention that your supporting leg is poised on the back of a crouching dwarf, that you have four arms and each of them is doing a different thing, and that as you dance you are effecting the destruction and re-creation of the universe? Maybe we shouldn't distract you.

How to get into Shiva's pose is just one of the things we learned from Vishakha N. Desai, a former Bharata Natyam dancer, who is currently the director of the Asia Society galleries (725 Park Avenue, at 70th Street). She spoke during a recent press conference that was held in conjunction with the Society's new exhibit, "The Cosmic Dancer: Shiva Nataraja." On display is a group of ravishing South Indian bronzes of the Chola period (880-1279 A.D.) relating to Shiva, the Lord of the Dance, and to his family. The centerpiece of the show, a bronze dated about 970 A.D., from the Asia Society's Rockefeller collection, is probably one of the greatest dance sculptures in the world. It depicts Shiva, in the pose described above, surrounded by a halo of flames. Dr. Desai showed us how the sculptor continually readjusted the figure's alignment, so that no matter where one stands the eye never sees Lord Shiva in a forced perspective that might suggest his balance is in doubt. Is this sensitivity to the dance pose important to art historians generally, we asked. Dr. Desai paused a moment, then she said, "No."

"The Cosmic Dancer" will be on display through June 28. In conjunction with the show, the Asia Society is presenting six performances of Indian dance, by Leela Raja (a protégée of Indrani's), on Sundays in April and May. Also, on March 31, at 6:30, Dr. Desai will give a lecture titled "Deities, Devotees, and Dance in India: Reflections on the Image and Experience of the Dancing Shiva."

MERCE CUNNINGHAM DANCE COMPANY—Final performances of the engagement. March 24 at 8: "Inventions," "Change of Address" (New York première), and "Trackers."... ¶ March 25 at 8: "Channels/Inserts," "Change of Address," and "Loosestrife."... ¶ March 26 at 8: "Change of Address," "Beach Birds," and "Trackers."... ¶ March 27 at 8: "Channels/Inserts," "Native Green," and "Loosestrife."... ¶ March 28 at 2: "Beach Birds," "Change of Address," and "August Pace."... ¶ March 28 at 8: "Beach Birds," "Change of Address," and "Loosestrife."... ¶ March 29 at 3: "Beach Birds," "Change of Address," and "Trackers." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

CARLOTA SANTANA SPANISH DANCE COMPANY—Presenting "El Encuentro de Dos Mundos" (première), "Quebrantos," "Las Raices de Almería," and "Tablao Flamenco." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. March 24-27 at 8, March 28 at 2 and 8, and March 29 at 2 and 7:30.)

NANCY MEEHAN DANCE COMPANY—In "Beginnings," "9 Leaf Window," and the première of a new work. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. March 27-29 at 8. For reservations, call 924-0077.)

ZEROMOVING DANCE COMPANY—A Philadelphia-based troupe in the opening performances of a one-week engagement. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. March 31-April 1 at 8. Through April 5.)

Lush at the Ritz

NIGHT LIFE

JEFFREY GAINES has said that he first awakened to music at an Elvis Costello concert, in 1978. Even fourteen years later, as Gaines releases his début record, there's no mistaking the influence. His recent solo set at the Knitting Factory was engaging, but it was a bit disconcerting to find Costello's melodies turning up here and there. The singers are worlds apart, after all: Jeffrey Gaines writes plain and hopeful lyrics, while Elvis Costello's have become increasingly twisted and curmudgeonly over the years. Jeffrey Gaines is a handsome twenty-six-year-old black man, while Elvis Costello looks like, well, Elvis Costello.

Gaines is entirely likable onstage. He's not a bad guitar player, but it's his raspy voice and his bashful, beaming demeanor that carry the show. As a songwriter, though, Gaines has yet to come into his own. In a setting as stark as a solo set, even his most compelling numbers—"Scares Me More," "Didn't Wanna Be Daddy," "Hero in Me"—seem a little earnest, a little *young*. Gaines' songs fare better on record, where they get a lift from a breezy, uncrowded production and coast along nicely with acoustic guitars, piano, and drums. Chrysalis, Gaines' record company, doesn't have a hit-maker on its hands, but it does have a pretty sound investment in the future.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town.... ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**MARY CLEERE HARAN** has just begun a month-long engagement in the woody nook known as the Oak Room. Haran will be presenting a new program, one that includes a segment devoted to songs by Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke. Shows at nine-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

BALLROOM, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A tony cabaret attained by passing through an opulent tapas restaurant, where wicker baskets overflow with fruit and vegetables and hams hang over the bar; if you haven't had dinner, you may never make it to the show. **IVAN LINS**, a Brazilian pop singer who recently released an album titled "Awa Yio," finishes up on March 28; **DAVE FRISHBERG** is in residence as of March 29. Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine, Fridays and Saturdays at nine and eleven-fifteen, and Sundays at three.

BIRDLAND, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—This northern restaurant-bar, an airy, two-tiered space with pastel walls and potted greenery, is a shade too slick for Columbia students but just right for post-collegiate jazz fans. The name is taken from the long-gone midtown pleasure dome that featured Bird himself. The Lew Tabackin quintet, featuring Tom Harrell, holds forth March 27-28. Music from nine. Dining.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Jazz, mirrors, a gift shop, and, of course, those incredible shrinking aisles that turn a mid-set dash to the rest room into something of a steeplechase. One can't help but have mixed feelings about the Blue Note. It's quite expensive. It's not exactly comfortable. And the last few moments of every show are always ruined when, in the interest of that sacred thing known as turnover, the waiters and waitresses come down the aisles bearing checks. On the other hand, it *is* a haven for any number of topflight jazz stars. Singer **PHYLLIS HYMAN** is here March 24-29; **KENNY DREW, JR.**, and the **JOHN SERRY** quartet come in on March 30; and **MAYNARD FERGUSON** leads the Big Bop Nouveau Band as of March 31. First set at nine. Dining.

BRADLEY'S, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A neighborhood bar in the heart of N.Y.U. country. It's advisable to get all your talking done between sets, because once the first chord is struck the audience here—with a little help from the management—becomes as quiet as a church congregation. A trio consisting of **GARY BARTZ, GEORGE CABLES,** and **IRA COLEMAN** is in swing through March 28; trumpeter **ROY HARGROVE** plays in a trio on March 29; and **BENNY GREEN** and **CHRISTIAN MC BRIDE** begin a week's worth of performances on March 30. Music from ten. Dining.

CAFÉ SIN-É, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—An unpretentious storefront café devoted to such things as Irish stew and the *Irish Times*. There's no stage per se, but bohemian musicians gather around a piano and work up some nice, wistful sets while bohemian patrons sit writing in journals, rolling cigarettes, or lingering over one of the two varieties of beer sold here: Budweiser and Rolling Rock. Sin-é means "that's it" in Gaelic and is *not* Sinéad O'Connor's nickname. The café is a nice place to while away an hour, and you never know who'll turn up and tune up Music generally begins at about eight-thirty

CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals and, until March 28, **EARTHA KITT**. Ms. Kit has a staggering list of stage, TV, and recording credits. Most of her songs are tale of men and money, and she doesn't so much

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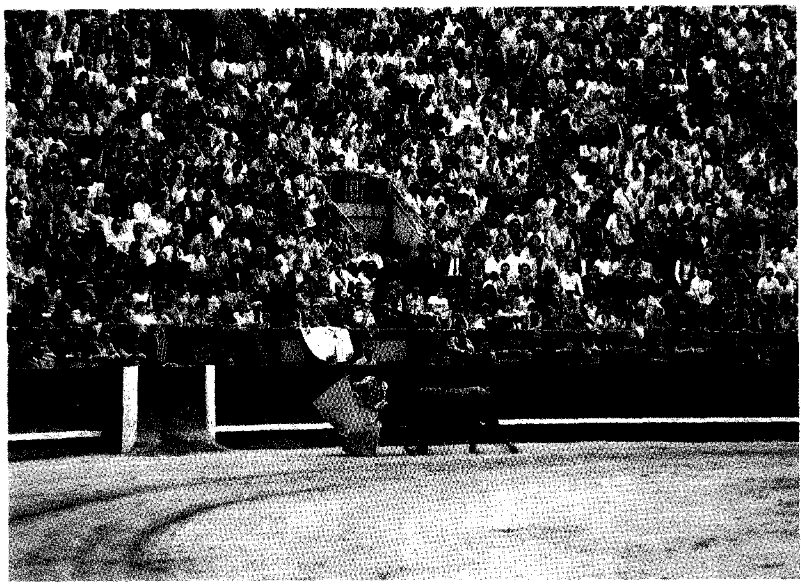
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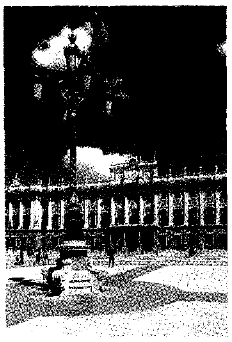
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Madrid's Plaza de Toros attracts the most skilled matadors; right, the Royal Palace

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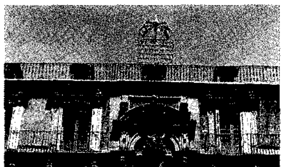
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All through this spectacular cultural season, the jewels of Madrid shine as brightly as ever. A visit to the magnificent Prado Museum, with its unmatched collection of artworks by El Greco, Goya, and Velázquez, as well as paintings by Bosch, Raphael, Botticelli, Correggio, and Titian, is not to be missed. Nearby, in the Casón del Buen Retiro, which houses the modern works of the Prado, Picasso's "Guernica" is on display. The eighteenth-century Royal Palace, commissioned by French-born King Philip V and completed during the reign of his successor Charles III, offers a touch of Versailles but has its own strong, soaring personality. And if these breathtaking sights begin to feel overwhelming, a retreat to the tranquillity of Madrid's beautiful Retiro Park, once an exclusive refuge for Spanish monarchs and their guests, will restore the spirit.

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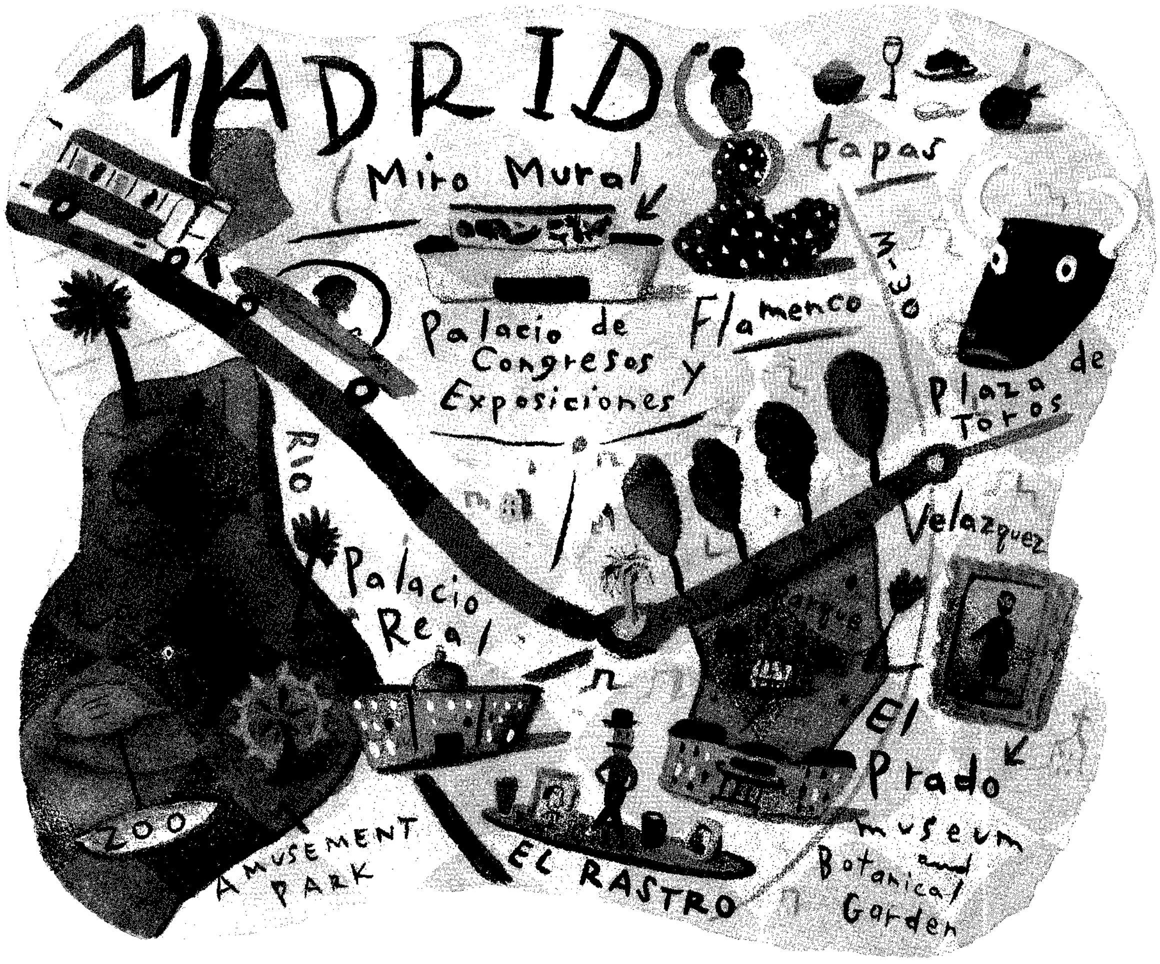

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HEPTAD

Although Finnish artist Martti Aiha's personal lucky number is eleven, he is also intrigued by the mystical number seven and its endless ancient associations. To celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of Finland's independence from czarist Russia, he has created "Seven Magic Points," a swirling bronze sculptural meditation on the number. It can be seen through the end of June, at Doris C. Freedman Plaza, at the southeast entrance to Central Park (Fifth Avenue at 60th Street).

The sculpture was commissioned by the Public Art Fund, a non-profit group, and the Finnish Foundation for the Visual Arts. Although it is some twenty feet in diameter, it rises a mere five and a quarter inches off the cobbled stretch of plaza it stands on, making it easy to miss from even a short distance away. "New York is a very vertical town," Mr. Aiha explains. "You cannot fight with those buildings. So I had the idea of making something that you have to come quite near to see. I wanted the piece to be floating in the city."

Its seven irregular, deeply fissured segments are welded together—one in the middle and the other six arrayed, jigsaw-puzzle-like, around it—to form a circle with a jagged circumference. Close up, the piece looks like a wheel of flames, or an abstract patch of luxuriating vegetation, or a gigantic plate fractured into a landscape of wildly twisting fjords. Aiha's design blends his fascination with numbers with ornamental motifs borrowed from Karelian calligraphy, which he once studied to improve his handwriting. (Karelia was the land of his forefathers, a territory to the east of Finland that was surrendered to the Soviets in 1944.) While the sculpture's mellow patina connects it to a neighboring gilt statue of General Sherman and to the opulent aura of Fifth Avenue, rain and snow are already specking its surface with verdigris spots, like moss on a tree stump. "It's changing," Mr. Aiha says happily on the phone from Helsinki. "I think it's going to be green by summer."

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sing her lyrics as growl them, prowling the stage like a lioness protecting her cubs. **DIXIE CARTER** takes over on March 31. Music Tuesdays through Saturdays at eight-forty-five and ten-forty-five. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **RONNY WHYTE** presides at the piano through March 28. **BARBARA CARROLL** takes over the bench beginning on March 31. Music from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (255-7373)—A club that promises to "feature only Chicago-area blues artists working with their regular Chicago blues bands." This concept may not appeal to New York blues artists, but it affords local blues aficionados a chance to hear what they've been missing. **JOHNNY COPELAND** is here March 27-28 and **MOOSE WALKER** appears March 31-April 2. Music from nine Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from nine-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

FAT TUESDAY'S, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—The seating arrangements in this long, narrow, red-velvet-and-mirror-walled basement make flying coach seem roomy; nevertheless, it's one of the city's top jazz spots—thanks largely to the club's talent bookers. But watch your head. The **KENNY BARRON** quintet is in charge of things until March 29. Jazz flutist **DAVE VALENTIN** and his group take over beginning on March 31. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL** leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

J'S, 2581 Broadway, at 97th St. (666-3600)—An Upper West Side jazz room, one steep flight up from the hurly-burly. Jazz people are on the premises nightly except Sundays, when a jukebox stocked with sixties rock and soul lights up. A few of this week's performers: the **KEN PEPLOWSKI** quartet (March 28), **ANN HAMPTON CALLAWAY** and **NATALIE DOUGLAS** (March 29), **HAROLD DANKO** (March 30), and **BARBARA LEA** (March 31). Music from eight-thirty Mondays through Thursdays, and from nine Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Brass rails, vintage posters, Hirschfeld drawings, a menu full of items like bangers and mash, and a piano. Knickerbocker is an airy, good-spirited place and, while music often takes a back seat to conversation, some able piano-and-bass teams turn up regularly. **CAROL BRITTO** performs March 25-28; **LEE MUSIKER** and **JAY LEONHART** start up on April 1. Shows from nine-forty-five.

MARQUEE, 547 W. 21st St. (929-3257)—If the hero of a movie walked down this creepy, semi-deserted block, the audience would be throwing things at the screen and shouting "Turn back! Turn back!" Thanks to this fine alternative-music club, though, there's usually a fairly steady flow of traffic through these parts. This week, intrepid young New Yorkers will be coming to see **CHRIS WHITLEY** and **TOAD THE WET SPROCKET,** who will share a bill on March 31. Whitley, a Texas blues-rocker who combines commercial appeal, an authentic roots sound, and edgy, literate lyrics, is the headliner, but the opening act is an excellent reason to show up early. Toad the Wet Sprocket (a deceptively frivolous name lifted from a Monty Python skit) deserves a place at the forefront of the international brigade of guitar-based rockers fighting to emerge from the shadow of R.E.M., U2, and the Smiths. Their resonant new album, "Fear," could have been a ringing surprise coming out of Athens or Manchester or Glasgow or even Seattle, but, as it turns out, Toad is a quartet of fresh-faced young fellows from Santa Barbara. Go figure.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—A plain blue back room whose far wall is decorated with round things: a Frisbee, some singles, a drum head, and the woofer from a speaker cabinet, to name a few. **TINY LIGHTS,** who perform on March 27, play an odd mixture of R. & B. and art music. One minute you'd swear they were disciples of Big Brother & the Holding Company, but then, just when you're headed for the dance floor, they'll break into whale sounds. The **LYRES,** who can be found here on March 28, enjoy near-godlike status in the sixties-garage-rock scene. Their sound is composed of crunching guitar riffs, unstoppable rhythmic grooves, pounding organ chords, and the hard-edged, unsentimental vocals of lead singer Jeff Conolly (a.k.a. Mono Man). When the band is in peak form (not always a sure bet), their music is a pure distillation of frenzy, lust, and rebellion. The **VERLAINES** are here on March 29. Shows at ten on Thursdays, and at eleven on Fridays and Saturdays.

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—There's more to Michael's Pub than Woody Allen, whose occasional Monday-night Dixieland binges have given the place a little star cachet. Non-filmmakers can usually be found onstage here the rest of the week, in a main dining room that strives for the appearance of a British pub but looks more like a good old American family restaurant. Still, there's a real nice red telephone booth when you walk in the door. **ELLEN GREENE** provides the entertainment through March 28. Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen.

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—Not to be confused with its richer cousin, the Rainbow Room, which is just down the hall. There, you'll find expansive Art Deco glitter; here, intimate nineties glitter. The performers, with their backs to the window, have to compete with a view of the Hudson, the George Washington Bridge, and beyond. **HELEN SCHNEIDER** has just one thing on her mind: Harold Arlen. Her engagement here draws to a close on March 28. Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Mondays.

RITZ, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—This decaying theatre was once the famous Studio 54, where the late Steve Rubell's henchmen helped popularize the policy of turning away the unbeautiful. Now it's the home of one of the city's biggest, oldest, and loudest rock clubs, which was formerly housed in a decaying ballroom in the East Village. The club features a broad stage, mobile-home-size speakers, plenty of room to shimmy, and, for the sedentary, a giant Big Brother video screen. **LUSH** and **BABES IN TOYLAND** share the bill on March 27, and the art-rock outfit **MARILLION** comes in on March 28. Show times vary.

RUSSIAN TEA ROOM, 150 W. 57th St. (265-0947)—A fabled spot (currently celebrating its sixty-fifth anniversary) with a small, red-gold-and-green cabaret. **LILIANE MONTEVECCHI** will be here on March 29. Shows Sundays at eight and, upon demand, ten-thirty. Dining and, of course, drinking.

SOUNDS OF BRAZIL, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut decorated with a fruit-and-bamboo motif and dedicated to such things as calypso, reggae, and bossa nova. S.O.B.'s dance floor is always jumping with Rastas and N.Y.U. students, and there's always someone onstage shouting "Put your hands in the air!" **JUDY MOWATT** appears on March 25; **DAVE VALENTIN** comes in on March 26; and **PONCHO SANCHEZ** performs on March 27. Closed Sundays. Dining.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—An itinerary stop for the international jazz groupies who, on any given night, can be seen roaming the streets of the Village. Up front, there's a glass-enclosed sidewalk café; in back is a larger room, with a pressed-tin ceiling, red brick, and more pinewood than a ski lodge. The **ART FARMER** quintet, which currently features the extraordinary tenor saxophonist **CLIFFORD JORDAN,** finishes up its run on March 29. The breezy Bud Powell devotee **TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI,** whose big band was, not so long ago, a regular staple of New York City's night life, turns her attention to a quintet as of March 31. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **MILES EVANS** is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

TRAMPS, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—A broad, spacious, and agreeable club, located near what was once called Ladies' Mile but might now be termed the pool-hall district. The pillared, loftlike room is decorated in a hodgepodge, vaguely Bourbon Street manner, and sight lines are above average. But the sound system has been known to be temperamental. The Nashville-based outfit **WEBB WILDER,** which recently released "Doo Dad," a good-humored and highly likable exercise in mid-tempo, guitar-driven rock, will be here on March 27. The **BELMONT PLAYBOYS** will share the bill. Music from eight on weeknights and from eight-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The late Max Gordon, who opened this holiest of jazz shrines in 1935, once described the club's early patrons as a mix of "poets, W.P.A. writers, hustlers, broads on the make, and moochers." The **DONALD HARRISON** quintet is here through March 29. A trio belonging to pianist **MC COY TYNER** holds forth as of March 31. Tyner's outfit puts on an extraordinary show, during which his own playing proceeds seamlessly from the thunderous and showy to the lyrical and understated. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays. Music after nine-thirty.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—A relatively young club that's already made a scene. Shows here can be absurdly sweaty and tight—the club seems to have a hard time turning people away—and it can be hard to get a view of the stage. Still, Wetlands is such a maze of a place that there's always some mellow corner to retire to. **BLACK 47,** which will be here on March 27, is led by a politically minded Irish expatriate named Larry Kirwan, and its shows have attracted a flood of musicians and record executives, not to mention downtowners of every variety. The band has just released its first album, a wild, sardonic outing that manages to quote rock, reggae, and rap, among other things. **JOAN OSBORNE** sings the blues on March 28. Shows from ten.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

YOU know there's something wrong with a club when its doorman doesn't recognize "Pure Sex" when he sees it. Not that we're claiming we ooze irresistibility from every pore—rather, that was the name printed on the vial of colorless liquid attached to an invitation from Tilt (179 Varick Street), right above the club's address and the date and time the potion was supposed to be activated. However, when we presented our bottle to the "big fella" standing behind Tilt's velvet rope, he just stared at it like a city boy at a calf birthing. "What is it? Where'd you get it?" he asked. He called his bouncer comrade over, as well as a third gentleman of unspecified importance. Their only comment was "We still have to charge you." They wanted us to *pay*? After we'd schlepped all the way downtown, on a blisteringly cold night, to a club with no reputation, for a party its staff didn't even know existed? The doorman admitted we did have a point.

Inside, it was obvious that most of the other vials must have got lost in the mail. For although Tilt is an improved incarnation of the defunct, overrated Heartbreak (a club where more people used to squeeze into a bathroom stall than clowns in a circus car), with a spacious, open dance floor and an alluring blue-lighted bar, its celebrants were as uncohesive as moviegoers in the lobby of Chelsea Cinemas on a Friday night. In the comfortable but superfluous V.I.P. room, we discovered an earring on a couch, and tracked down the young lady wearing its match. When handed her lost accessory, she stared at it, sniffed it, and pulled us closer. She then whispered, "Oh, I thought this was some kind of pill, 'cause it's so shiny. Do you know where I could find some Ecstasy or Excedrin P.M.?"

On the way out, we offered the doorman the vial. He wanted to know what was in it. Baby oil, we told him.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

RINGLING BROTHERS AND BARNUM & BAILEY CIRCUS—The hundred-and-twenty-second version of The Greatest Show on Earth. (Nassau Coliseum. March 23-24. For information about show times and tickets, call 1-516 794-9300. . . . ¶ Madison Square Garden. March 26-May 3. For information about show times and tickets, call 465-6000.)

"SOVIETIQUETTE (MY DAYS IN RUSSIA)"—A monologue by David Marquis. (One Dream, 232 West Broadway. March 25-29 at 8. For information about tickets, call 431-8092.)

"BRACE UP!"—A production by the Wooster Group, which includes text from "The Three Sisters," by Chekhov. With Kate Valk, Peyton Smith, Ron Vawter, Anna Kohler, and Jeff Webster. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651. March 27-29 at 8.)

REBEKAH WINDMILLER—A choreographer and poet, in "Whistleblower." (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. March 27-28 at 8:30 and March 29 at 3.)

ALIEN COMIC AND LISA KRON—In works in process. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, near Houston St. March 28 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the performances.)

P.S. 122—March 26-29 at 8: Diane Torr in "Ready Aye Ready," a performance piece in which Robert Burns poems are read aloud. . . . ¶ March 26-29 at 9: Donald Fleming in "Where You're Calling From," a dance piece inspired by the pickup scene. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

ART

PAUL CADMUS might generally be thought of as "the other Andrew Wyeth," were it not for his bawdy allegorical excesses. Cadmus, like Wyeth, is an impeccable academic draftsman, and since the early forties he has worked, very slowly, in an egg-tempera medium that re-creates the lapidary, saturated color schemes of early-Renaissance—or nineteenth-century Nazarene and Pre-Raphaelite—painting. And Cadmus, again like Wyeth, brings a cloying sentimentality to his studies of the body. Many of his isolated, Michelangelesque male nudes—Nordic bodies beautiful, for the most part—achieve the soft-core smarminess of Wyeth's notorious "Helga" pictures. And even a work as charming as "Sunday Sun," showing a dreamily preoccupied couple taking in the rays on a strip-of-tar tenement-roof beach, stays within the boundaries of illustration. Here, however, the similarities end. Because of his full-blown Lawrentian fervors, the up-front homoeroticism that has long pervaded his work, and his rather Flemish, carnivalesque vision of life, the eighty-seven-year-old Cadmus remains a great oddball figure in art—the last of the Magic Realists.

The Cadmus show at Midtown-Payson (745 Fifth Avenue, at 57th Street; through April 18) is fun. "The Fleet's In!," his controversial 1934 promenade scene and satire of sailors on shore leave, from the collection of the Navy Museum, in Washington, D.C., greets one cheerfully at the door. Crowd scenes are what Cadmus does best. This painting—along with other notably bumptious works not on view here, like the 1938 "Sailors and Floosies" (given to the Whitney by the late Malcolm Forbes), "Shore Leave" (1933), "Y.M.C.A. Locker Room" (1933), "Coney Island" (1934), "Seeing the New Year In" (1939), and "Bar Italia" (1955), a masterpiece of Lucullan caricature—belongs to the *echt*-populist strain in twentieth-century American art, which also brought us Jerome Robbins' "Fancy Free" and other coolly Precisionist works about boastfulness and lust. (Cadmus, whose sister married Lincoln Kirstein, is a friend of the choreographer's.)

Cadmus's other strong suit is the symbolist-horror genre. His suite of "The Seven Deadly Sins" (1945-49), for instance, recalls works by such fin-de-siècle Belgian ghoulsters as Léon Frédéric and Jean Delville. This theme was evidently so satisfying to the artist that in 1983 he appended "The Eighth Sin: Jealousy."

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

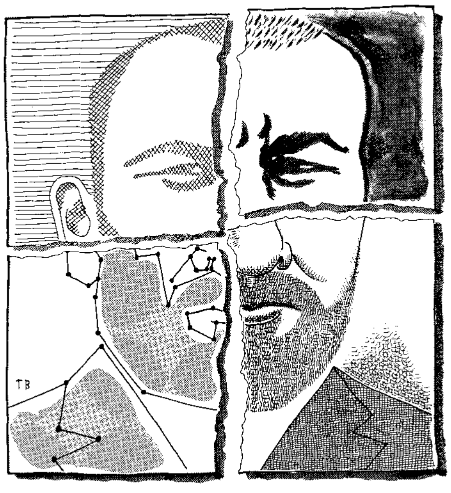
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—Barbizon, in the Forest of Fontainebleau, was a meeting place and inspiration for several French landscape painters in the eighteen-fifties and sixties. A large sampling of works by these artists—Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, and others—is on view. Through May 10. . . . ¶ Fifty works by William Harnett (1848-92), the Irish-American painter who was the father of the trompe-l'oeil school. Through June 14. . . . ¶ The recent donation of the Perls collection—a hundred and sixty-three objects from the kingdom of Benin—has substantially redefined the museum's African holdings. This exhibition of the collection is a welcome relief from the rigid theatre of many of the museum's blockbusters: it enables viewers to make their own discoveries. . . . ¶ "American Rococo, 1750-1775." Furniture, silver, paintings, engravings, ceramics, and glass made in pre-Revolutionary America. Through May 17. . . . ¶ "The Lotus Transcendent." The Eilenberg collection, from which this show has been selected, is not particularly comprehensive nor focussed on grand masterpieces, but it does sparkle in many unexpected ways. For instance, it includes a group of bronze sculptures from Indonesia that many consider to be the finest privately assembled collection of such material in the world. Through June 28. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—"The Paley Collection." While no museum in its right mind would turn down a bequest that included Picasso's "Boy Leading a Horse" (1905-06) or his "Nude with Joined Hands" (1906), or the handful of other Paley plums, the surprising over-all blandness of this group instills little more than a vague, mildly contemptuous sense of familiarity. Only the Picasso "Boy" and a few other paintings seem to transcend the pasteurization of Paley's taste. The larger, Post-Impressionist part of the collection does include some charming lesser works. Derain's 1933 painting "The Rehearsal," of two actors on a murky stage, is one such oddball in this almost unrelievedly pretty assortment. And a group of small Maillol table bronzes, among the very few Paley sculptures, looks powerful. Through April 7. . . . ¶ "Allegories of Modernism: Contemporary Drawing," two hundred works by forty American and European artists. Through May 5. . . . ¶ A small show of recent photographs by Gay Block, of people who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. Through April 7. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

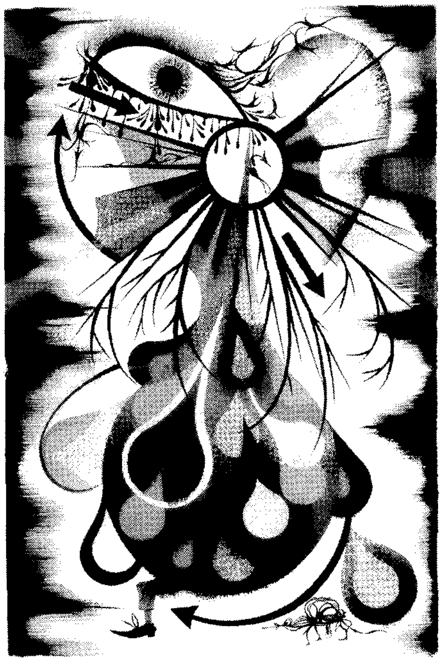
GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until late spring.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—A retrospective of photographs by Paul Strand. Through May 17. . . . ¶ The William Wegman show includes nearly two hundred paintings, drawings, photographs, and videotapes. Through April 19. . . . ¶ A large exhibition of paintings, drawings, etchings, and woodcuts by Terry Winters. Through May 10. . . . ¶ A new series of pastel drawings by Joan Mitchell. Through June 21. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, Eastern Parkway—Seventy "Destructions," "Accumulations," and "Cachets" by the inimitable French Nouveau Réaliste Arman. Through April 26. . . . ¶ "The New Merengue," an installation by sculptor Houston Conwill, poet Estella Conwill Majozo, and architect Joseph De Pace. Through May 3. . . . ¶ "Contemporary Wood Sculpture" includes works by Kenji Fujita, Jane Greengold,



Martin Kippenberger



Self-portrait by Lari Pittman

and Louise Nevelson, among others. Through June 7. . . . ¶ "Biomorphicism and Organic Abstraction in Twentieth-Century Decorative Arts." (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"The Streets of Dai Fau," a show of photographs by Arnold Genthe (1869-1946) which depict San Francisco's Chinatown before 1906. Through June 30. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, Broadway at 155th St.—The Academy-Institute's annual painting-and-sculpture invitational. Artists on view include Sylvia Plimack Mangold, Jake Berthot, Tom Otterness, and Debra Birmingham. Through March 29. (Open daily, except Mondays, 1 to 4.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—"The Cosmic Dancer." The tenth-century Hindu bronze of Shiva Nataraja, Lord of the Dance, reigns as the centerpiece of this show of fifty sculptures from India and Southeast Asia. Through June 28. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St.—Joseph Beuys' early-seventies aluminum-glass-and-photo panel work titled "Arena—where would I have got if I had been intelligent!" Through June 21. . . . ¶ Six large paintings are the centerpiece of Brice Marden's show of works inspired by the Tang-dynasty poet Cold Mountain. Through May 31. . . . ¶ "Displacement," a whole floor of painted Conceptual and graphic wordplay by Lawrence Weiner. Through April 30. . . . ¶ On the roof, Dan Graham has created a fine urban park with glass walls, a floor of spongy asphalt tiles, and a squat glass cylinder at its center. The park is elevated above the roof as if it were afloat, and it is very pleasant to spend time up there, especially in the nearby coffee bar/video lounge. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—"Italian Art at the Close of the Quattrocento" is a show in two parts: the first is a group of eight works attributed to Antonio Pollaiuolo, including his small bronze "Hercules"; the second is a tour of paintings and sculptures in the collection, focussing on four panels by Piero della Francesca. Through March 29. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Jewish Museum, at the New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—"Bridges and Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews." This show—comprising three hundred and fifty art works, photographs, and documents—explores the complex relationship of coöperation and tension between the two cultures. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Sundays, 11 to 5; Thursdays, 11 to 8; Fridays, 11 to 3.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—Seventeenth-century Dutch drawings—of the landscape, genre, and figure variety—by Rembrandt, Ruisdael, Goltzius, and many others. Through April 26. . . . ¶ A small show of printed books and bindings produced in seventeenth-century Flanders and Holland. Through April 26. . . . ¶ Selections on view from the library's permanent collection include one of its three Gutenberg Bibles, Stevenson's autograph manuscript of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," and the original scores of symphonies by Brahms and Mahler. Through April 26. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"Walt Whitman and New York." The Long Island-born Brooklynite is celebrated in a show that juxtaposes prose and poetry with nineteenth-century paintings, prints, and photographs. Starts March 26. (For related events, see Above and Beyond.). . . ¶ "Broadway! 125 Years of Musical Theatre." A large assortment of objects—including paintings, posters, scripts, models, sheet music, and memorabilia—from nearly seventy-five productions that have bowed on the Great White Way. First seen in New York at the I.B.M. Gallery last summer. . . . ¶ "Harvey Wang's New York" is a show of photographic portraits of older workers in the city, accompanied by brief stories about each person. Through March 29. . . . ¶ Fifty paintings, watercolors, and lithographs by the Dutch artist Adriaan Lubbers (1892-1954), whose fascination with New York City is reflected in his urban landscapes. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The hundred-and-sixty-seventh annual juried exhibition includes oil paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings, pastels, watercolors, and an architectural drawing. Through May 10. (Open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—A show chronicling the design, construction, and urban context of New York's City Hall (1803-12). Forty-seven drawings, along with watercolors, prints, books, and a model, illumine the neoclassical edifice. Through June 28. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, 11 to 5.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway—"1+1+1," a series of recent sculptural projects by Alfredo Jaar, primarily in the form of large-scale light-box installations. Through April 19. . . . ¶ "The Big Nothing or Le Presque Rien," a group exhibition in which each artist has been asked to contemplate the notions of emptiness and materiality. Through April 19. . . . ¶ Jeffry Mitchell's installation consists of rubber, plaster, and latex tableaux of cartoon figures, toy creatures, and other kitschy icons. Through April 19. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—The Walt Whitman centenary is under way, and one of the more comprehensive celebratory exhibitions is "In Life or Death Forever": a hundred and fifty manuscripts, books, photographs, and letters culled from both the Berg and Oscar Lion collections. (For related events, see Above and Beyond.). . . ¶ Recently acquired photographs are on display, including Morris Engel's panoramic views of New York City and Desiré Charnay's eighteen-fifties albumen prints of Mexico City. Through May 2. (Third Floor Gallery.) (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadow Park—Ik-Joong Kang's "3 x 3," an installation that consists of thousands of three-inch-square paintings and collages. Through April 12. . . . ¶ "Art Beyond Sight," an exhibition of paintings and sculptures by visually impaired artists; museumgoers are permitted to touch the sculptures. Through March 29. . . . ¶ Cibachrome prints of rearranged newsprint, by Sarah Charlesworth. Through April 12. . . . ¶ A survey of forty paintings by figurative artists Henrietta Mantooth and Willy Lenski. Through April 12. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—"Africa and the Diaspora" features nearly a hundred works from the museum's collection, dating from the fifth century to the present. Through June 7. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Jörg Immendorff—A few months ago, Immendorff's unbridled neo-Dada "LIDL" works, from the sixties, were on view here. Now we find the more ideologically constrained but more pictorially vital fruits of this fascinating artist's early-seventies Maoist Party period, during which his commitment to the social cause had to be proved all the more convincingly because of his highly suspect involvement with the gallery system—in fact, with *this* gallery, in Cologne. Several paintings in this show, and the show itself, are titled "I Wanted to Be an Artist." Immendorff's humorous, cartoonishly doctrinaire tableaux, with their brandished slogans and their strong young men and women of the people—students, of course, and workers—are social realism at its best, and they clearly anticipate the artist's famous "Café Deutschland" series. Not only are these vigorously painted and compositionally arresting paintings fun to look at, but, to American eyes at least, they also supply a missing art-historical link that zigzags across the Atlantic to connect Philip Guston's late works with the urban realism of Anton van Dalen, a Dutch-born expatriate in this country who is about Immendorff's age. Through April 18. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St.)

Short List—**george grosz,** Soufer, 1015 Madison Ave., at 78th St. (through April 30); **grace hartigan,** Anita Friedman, 980 Madison Ave., at 77th St. (through April 1); **jules olitski,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. (through March 28); **theodore roszak,** Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. (through April 11); **richard serra,** Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St., and Pace, 142 Greene St. (through April 25); **esteban vicente,** Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. (open Mondays, through March 28); **robert white,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. (through March 28); **christopher wilmarth,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. (open Mondays, through March 28); **paul wonner,** Coe Kerr, 49 E. 82nd St. (through April 4).

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

Theophilus Brown—This show of new paintings is entirely focussed on the Cézannesque theme of nude bathers in open-air settings—not, traditionally, a comic genre. Yet many of Brown's bathers are quite funny. His depictions of compromising seaside positions, including a few psychologically ambiguous triangulations among these laconic figures, provide some of the jokes. In their low-key and resolutely everyday way, Brown's subjects, as usual, seem also to reverberate with the stentorian rhythms and otherworldly frissons of symbolism. But therein, too, is humor. Some of these pictures—they are most vivid, paradoxically, when most chromatically subdued—seem to tweak the nose of Maurice Denis. Indeed, Brown might be a wry latter-day Bay Area Nabi. Through April 3. (Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St.)

Vija Celmins—An extraordinary exhibition of paintings. There are several of the night sky—blue-black grounds, painted and painted until the surfaces have achieved the luminescence of lacquer, interspersed with seas of dots of various sizes. These "stars," repeatedly painted over and excavated through the accumulating layers, radiate a pure white light that couldn't be brighter or more awe-inspiring. Through April 4. (McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Terrence La Noue—Accomplished yet relatively empty paintings of complicated spaces in which curvilinear forms and whirlpools become ground. In the best of them, the flip-flop of form and space suggests primordial gases on the verge of forming land. But in the rest the artist simply uses a lot of bright color in a lampooning way that suggests Hundertwasser's decorativeness. Through March 28. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

Donald Lipski—This artist works well with two qualities generally distrusted in art—humor and gregariousness. And his shows are always more refreshing and penetrating than one remembers past shows as having been. These new pieces, however, while quite clever, forsake humor for poignancy. The artist has used white candles everywhere—there are short ones in a huge steel ladle, chunky ones filling an old harp case, and a sea of tall skinny ones stuffed into the frame of a wooden bed—and they give the show an enveloping memorial character. For those more taken with the artist's endless cleverness, there is a wall of smaller objects with candles, some lit and dripping away. Through April 11. (Lelong, 20 W. 57th St.)

Peter Saul—A sensational new show titled "Heroic Themes." The anti-authoritarian Saul has this time set his apoplectic imagistic Furies on some of the more authoritative precedents in the canon of Western art. His huge new hallucinatory history paintings include "Raft of the Medusa," "The Alamo," "Custer's Last Stand," and "The Last Judgment," and each is an improbable wonder to behold. Through March 31. (Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St.)

Short List—**GIOVANNI ANSELMO,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through April 4); **GEORG BASELITZ,** Pace, 32 E. 57th St. (through April 18); **SAINT CLAIR CEMIN,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. (through April 4); **ARTHUR DOVE** and **WALTER ANDERSON,** Ross, 50 W. 57th St. (through April 30); **LAURA GRISI,** Haime, 41 E. 57th St. (through April 4), and Castelli, 420 West Broadway (through March 28); **MICHAEL GOLDBERG,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. (through April 18); **MARSDEN HARTLEY,** Babcock, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through April 25); **ANDRÉ MASSON,** Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through April 11); **LEIGH PALMER,** French, 24 W. 57th St. (through March 28); **ANNE POOR,** Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St. (through April 4); **BRUCE PORTER,** De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. (through April 2); **ARNULF RAINER,** Ulysses, 41 E. 57th St. (through March 28); **LUDWIG SANDER,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. (through April 11).

GALLERIES—SoHo

Giuseppe Gallo—Adept and precious mood paintings with lots of prancing forms and red paint. The works on paper in the gallery's office are more appealing, because of their improvisatory character, although they may suffer from thoughts of Boetti and Clemente. Through March 28. (Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St.)

Richard Kalina—Paintings that consist of grids of little squares of smeared black and white paint against grounds of collaged newsprint. The works are intelligent and well conceived, yet there is a stiffness to them. In the end, they are more the illustration of an idea than its embodiment. Through March 28. (Brown, 23 Watts St.)

Komar & Melamid—It took them a while, but now that the Soviet Union no longer exists these once dissident artists have finally discovered the Sears, Roebuck catalogue, and through it they have reached consumer paradise. This only mildly engaging installation offers simulated-brick doormats draped over sculpture stands, a crucifix made of acoustical ceiling tiles, and a "symphony" made by putting a tape recorder inside a Kenmore refrigerator/freezer. But despite the endless ironies about art and consumerism—or because of them—these slapdash works don't work. Through March 28. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St.)

Gary Lang—The best painting in this show is one called "Tickling Keys." Its ribbon-candy horizontals and verticals, with their intricate layering and frenetic surface rhythms, suggest the progressive urban life of the early sixties. The title surely refers to the obvious precedent for this work, "Broadway Boogie-Woogie," Mondrian's jazz-inspired celebration of New York. Lang is more deliberate in his use of color in two circular paintings that attempt to bring Zen to Delaunayan abstraction. These works are less successful because, oddly enough, despite the importance the artist has placed on color he is not a satisfying colorist. Through March 28. (Klein, 594 Broadway.)

Chris Martin—This artist has learned well the formal lessons of the first generation of German Neo-Expressionists, particularly A. R. Penck and Sigmar Polke. These large, squarish canvases are handsome and quite powerful in their suggestions of ritual and landscape, though they perhaps depend too much on sheer size for their strength. Through March 28. (Good, 532 Broadway.)

Gerhard Merz—Three installation works assembled with various materials—stainless steel, concrete, paint on canvas. A quote from Wittgenstein does little to help these inaccessible abstractions speak. Through March 28. (Gladstone, 99 Greene St.)

Peter Schuyff—A massive exhibition of two hundred watercolors in which the emphasis is on basketweave, harlequin, and spirographic patterns of the sort one finds in the artist's paintings, although there are a number of works in which Schuyff has, with neoplasticist delight, painted bars and circles over reproductions of academic figure drawings from the nineteenth century. Schuyff has a fine hand and a seductive color sense, and while his paintings tend to be impersonally perfected, the watercolors are gestural, reassuringly flawed. The salon-style installation here is undeniably impressive, though it has not escaped that format's tendency to diminish the strength of individual works that in isolation can be jewel-like. Through April 4. (Sperone Westwater, 121 Greene St.)

Al Taylor—These masterly drawings, called "Puddles," are both witty and beautiful. The watercolor, ink, gouache, and pencil forms suggest a fluid Eva Hesse, Arp's randomness, and the touch of the calligrapher. The drawings made with white gouache on black paper are particularly "Chinese" in feel, though the artist seems as comfortable with broad swings of the arm as he is with tight gestures of the wrist. Three inky arcs have been labelled "Tom," "Dick," and Harry," and in one particularly drip-filled series the artist has named every dot—some, such as "Coffee," by their medium, others, such as "Wayne," "Murphy," and "Egg," presumably by either association or arbitrary assignment. Although these are clearly a sculptor's drawings, the two sculptures of "Hanging Puddles" on view are not nearly as engaging. Through April 11. (Nolan, 560 Broadway.)

Megan Williams—Even though these exuberant works—pastels and altered books—are modest in scale, there is something grandiose in their demeanor. The pastels, which depict neo-futuristic, surrealistic exploding figures, possess a vague sexual undertone. They suggest Mike Kelley crossed with Sandro Chia. The altered books are mostly dictionaries, either carved into the form of amphitheatres or cleanly gored through as if shot with some pretty fat bullets. Through April 11. (Lee, 588 Broadway.)

"Geometric Abstraction to Abstract Expressionism"—An interesting examination of style and influence, consisting of pairs of works by seven different American artists—one geometric or lyrical, from the thirties, the other expressionistic, from the fifties. Curiously, while these artists remain primarily identified with the earlier styles, judging from the examples on view they tended to be better at the later one. Still, the relationships between the old and the new can be fascinating. The relatively unknown Josef Meierhans, who begins with a weak and shamelessly derivative Kandinskyesque abstraction, later shifts to a much more personal style. Charles Shaw is represented by a painted construction of the sort for which he achieved some prominence, yet his Abstract Expressionist canvas is far more deserving of attention. Ultimately, however, all the works, from whichever decade, tend toward the academic. Through March 28. (Snyder, 588 Broadway.)

Short List—**DORIANA CHIARINI,** Ala, 560 Broadway (through April 11); **MAUREEN CONNOR,** Germans van Eck, 420 West Broadway (through April 18); **JIŘÍ GEORG DOKOUPIL,** Shafrazi, 130 Prince St. (through April 11); **WILL INSLEY,** Protetch, 560 Broadway (through April 4); **MARTIN KIPPENBERGER,** Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St. (through April 4); **BERNARD MAISNER,** Cavin-Morris, 560 Broadway (through April 18); **CLAUDIA MATZKO,** Klagsbrun, 51 Greene St. (through April 11); **JOHN MC CRACKEN,** Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway (through April 4); **CATHERINE MURPHY,** Lennon, Weinberg, 580 Broadway (through April 11); **JOSEPH NECHVATAL,** Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St. (through April 4); **LARI PITTMAN,** Gorney, 100 Greene St. (through March 28); **SCOTT RICHTER,** Marcus, 578 Broadway (through March 28); **JOEL SHAPIRO,** Cooper, 149 Wooster St. (through April 11); **JONATHAN TALBOT,** Gimpel-Weitzenhoffer, 415 West Broadway (through March 28); **JOHN WILCOX,** Fawbush, 76 Grand St. (through April 2).

PHOTOGRAPHY

THERE'S not much time left to see the large memorial exhibition of Hans Namuth's photography at Castelli (578 Broadway); it closes this Saturday. The show includes minimalist photographs of early-American tools, pictures from the Spanish Civil War, a series of images taken in Guatemala, and shots of various social groups, but the bulk of what's here is artists' portraits—a genre Namuth seemed to love and at which he excelled.

These portraits of artists, in black-and-white and color, are a fantastic record; they're intimate, the opposite of gimmicky. In certain instances, there are several images of the same individual, separated by many years, so it's possible to get a deeper view than the usual one-shot look; possible even to get a sense of how someone physically changed with time. Most of the artists we see here are very famous, and most of them are men; at times we're shown them before and after their reputations made them into almost mythical beings. For instance, there's a shot of the young Jasper Johns, barefoot and bare-chested, wearing overalls. Of all Namuth's photographs, the ones that really knock us out are his well-known pictures of Jackson Pollock at work, and there's a good selection of these in the show. We know of no other such photographs that capture someone "taking the leap" as movingly as these do.

(Seven short films by Namuth, also portraits of artists, are on view from noon to 2:30, and can be viewed upon request at other times.)

William Wegman—A retrospective—of drawings, paintings, videos, and photographs—that gives one the chance to get a comprehensive view of Wegman's skills and of his perceptions of art and the world. Through April 19. (Whitney Museum of American Art. Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Photography at N.Y.P.L.—This show of recent acquisitions—an eclectic collection of images from the mid-nineteenth century to the present—is not a pampered viewing experience, but it is a pleasurable one. Some of the works are by famous photographers, some are by unknowns; some are generic, some are gems. Through May 2. (Third Floor Gallery.) (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

Short List—**ÉDOUARD-DENIS BALDUS** and **SUZANNE OPTON,** Lowinsky, 575 Broadway (through March 28); **MANUEL ALVAREZ BRAVO** and **STEPHEN BRIGIDI,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway (through April 11); **FREDERIC BRENNER,** International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through April 19); **NANCY BURSON,** Baum, 588 Broadway (through April 18); **ANDREW BUSH,** Lieberman & Saul, 155 Spring St. (through April 18); **WILLIAM CHRISTENBERRY** and **VICTOR SCHRAGER,** Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. (through March 28); **DAVID DORAN** and **JANET KERR,** Camera Club, 853 Broadway, at 14th St. (open Mondays through Fridays, 1 to 5; through March 27); **PETER HUJAR,** Danziger, 415 West Broadway (through April 4); **RAY METZKER** and **WILLIAM EGGLESTON,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. (through April 4); **EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE,** International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. (open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through April 26); **EDWARD WALLOWITCH,** Alexander, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. (through April 4); **SHIKANOSUKE YAGAKI,** Houk Friedman, 1094 Madison Ave., at 82nd St. (through April 25).

MUSIC

THE Measured Breaths Theatre Company made a stir with its most recent production (in May, 1991), a staging of Monteverdi's "Madrigals of Love and War." It already had the distinction of being the first company to bring Handel's "Tamerlano," a masterpiece, to New York City. The group's current project is another local première, the "Amadis" of Jean-Baptiste Lully. So it is not strictly accurate of the company to say of itself, as it does in promotions, that it is "known for creating a new form of musical theatre for post-modern times." What it *is* known for is the already rather passé postmodern trick of dressing up old forms of musical theatre instead of creating new ones. But no harm in that if it's excitingly done; or, if there is harm, there's not much point in worrying about it now. And there is certainly something intriguing about a company that tries to lure audiences to its productions by attacking the piece to be produced. "Amadis" is described as "a vicious, media-driven attempt to rewrite a French moral history to buoy the dejected spirits of Louis XIV's corrupt court"—who wouldn't want to see that?

Elly Ameling

The political agenda is not exactly veiled. Louis XIV's France was a "bloated superpower at the edge of its decline," a "nation inactive on its own ground and over-active on the territories of others"—hmm, whom else might that describe? But forewarned is forearmed, and Lully, as we've begun to learn in recent years, can be fascinating in the theatre. The first three Measured Breaths performances have gone by, but there are six more, March 27-29 and April 3-5, at the Gene Frankel Theatre.

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; for Alice Tully Hall, 875-5050; for Carnegie Hall, 247-7800; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**DON CARLO,** with Andrea Gruber, Nina Terentieva, Michael Sylvester, Vladimir Chernov, and Samuel Ramey; conducted by James Levine. (March 23 at 7.). . . **PARSIFAL,** with Waltraud Meier, Siegfried Jerusalem, Bernd Weikl, Franz Mazura, and Kurt Moll; James Levine. (March 24 at 6:30 and March 28 at noon.). . . **RIGOLETTO,** with Ruth Ann Swenson, Richard Leech, and Louis Quilico; Nello Santi. (March 25 at 8 and March 28 at 8:30.). . . **ELEKTRA,** the opening of a new production, with Hildegard Behrens, Deborah Voigt, Leonie Rysanek, James King, and Bernd Weikl; James Levine. (March 26 and March 31 at 8.). . . **LE NOZZE DI FIGARO,** with Carolyn James, Hei-Kyung Hong, Frederica von Stade, Jorma Hynninen, and Ferruccio Furlanetto; John Keenan. (March 27 at 8.). . . With Benita Valente, Dawn Upshaw, Frederica von Stade, Jorma Hynninen, and Feruccio Furlanetto; John Keenan. (March 30 at 8.). . . **LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST,** with Barbara Daniels, Placido Domingo, and Sherrill Milnes; Leonard Slatkin. (April 1 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House.)

St. Petersburg National Opera—Presenting three classic Russian operas, all based on stories by Pushkin and all presented with English supertitles. Tchaikovsky's **PIQUE DAME** (March 24-25, March 31, and April 1, all at 8; and March 29 at 1:30). . . . ¶ Mussorgsky's **BORIS GODUNOV** (March 26-27 at 8). . . . ¶ Rimsky-Korsakov's **LE COQ D'OR** (March 28 at 1:30 and 8). (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through April 5.)

"Amadis"—A politicized reinterpretation of Lully's 1684 *tragédie lyrique*, fully staged (in English), and set partly in modern America and partly in the Wild West. Presented by the Measured Breaths Theatre Company, which invokes the word "infotainment" to describe its project. (Gene Frankel Theatre, 24 Bond St. March 27-29 at 8. For information about tickets, call 334-8402. Through April 5.)

Amato Opera Company—Presenting "La Forza del Destino." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. March 27-28 at 7:30.)

Rossini Comedies—Fully staged productions (in Italian, with supertitles) of two comic operas—"La Scala di Seta" and "L'Occasione fa il Ladro"—that were premièred within seven months of each other in 1812 (a year in which Rossini unveiled no fewer than five operas!). Both will be conducted by Christopher Larkin (from a new critical edition), with stage direction by Johnathon Pape. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. 749-2802. April 1 at 8. Through April 5.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—André Previn conducts Britten's "Sinfonia da Requiem," Prokofiev's Seventh Symphony, and Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Jean-Philippe Collard). (Avery Fisher Hall. March 25-28 at 8 and March 31 at 7:30.)

Tchaikovsky Chamber Orchestra—Lazar Gosman leads the orchestra and various soloists in music by Mozart and Schnittke, as well as in two works by Shostakovich: an orchestral transcription of his Eighth String Quartet, and his First Piano Concerto (featuring Ignat Solzhenitsyn, son of the writer). (Alice Tully Hall. March 24 at 8.)

St. Ignatius Loyola Choir—Thomas Tallis's motet "Spem in Alium" is legendary among aficionados of Renaissance choral music for the extravagant forces it demands: forty separate voice parts organized into eight distinct choirs. Kent Tritle directs it twice, once in the reigning modern edition, and once in a new version (with English words) derived from sources in British archives. Other a-cappella works on the program include medieval pieces by Perotin and Hildegard von Bingen, Gregorio Allegri's celebrated "Miserere" (a favorite of Mozart's), and spanking new arrangements of spirituals. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 439-8044. March 25 at 8.)

New York Pops—At Carnegie Hall, Skitch Henderson conducting. March 26 at 8: A benefit concert that features (among other soloists) singers Judy Collins, Marilyn Horne, Cissy Houston, Maureen McGovern, Susan Quittmeyer, Robert Merrill, and James Morris. . . . ¶ March 27 at 8: A program devoted partly to spring and partly to Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Juilliard Symphony—Paul Zukofsky conducts Mahler's Symphony No. 7 and Hindemith's Kammermusik No. 5 (with violist Freya Kirby featured in the latter). (Alice Tully Hall. March 27 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal—At Carnegie Hall, Charles Dutoit conducting. March 28 at 8: The "Four Sea Interludes" from Britten's "Peter Grimes," Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade," and Walton's Viola Concerto (featuring Yuri Bashmet). . . . ¶ March 29 at 3: Honegger's Symphony No. 4 (subtitled "Deliciae Basilienses"), Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9, Ravel's "Ma Mère l'Oye" suite, and Ibert's Flute Concerto (featuring Timothy Hutchins).

St. John's Chorale and Chamber Orchestra—Eric Milnes directs Bach's B-Minor Mass. (St. Michael's Church, Amsterdam Ave. at 99th St. March 30 at 7:30. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Philadelphia Orchestra—Yuri Temirkanov conducts Sibelius' "Finlandia," Dvořák's Symphony No. 8, and Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3 (with Yefim Bronfman). (Carnegie Hall. March 31 at 8.)

RECITALS

Lark String Quartet—In the first concert for the general public to be held in Lincoln Center's newest performance space, the ensemble plays its namesake piece (Haydn's "Lark" Quartet) as well as Shostakovich's Quartet No. 8. Samuel Sanders joins the foursome for Schumann's Piano Quintet. (Walter Reade Theatre, 165 W. 65th St., Plaza Level. March 23 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

An die Musik—A brief concert of chamber works by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 24 at 6.)

Maurizio Pollini—The pianist performs two sonatas by Beethoven (Op. 7 and Op. 109), Book Two of Debussy's Études, and Nono's "Sofferte Onde Serene" (for piano and tape). (Carnegie Hall. March 24 at 8.)

Santiago Rodriguez—The pianist kicks off his three-concert survey of Rachmaninoff's major keyboard compositions by playing the Sonata No. 1, the Ten Preludes (Op. 23), and the "Variations on a Theme by Corelli." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. March 25 at 8.)

Tokyo String Quartet—An all-Mozart program: two quartets and (with violist Pinchas Zukerman) two quintets. (Alice Tully Hall. March 25 at 8.)

Organ Festival—Sign of the economically straitened times: what was to have been a week-long "organ crawl" with numerous luminary performers has shrunk to three concerts. Still, what survives of the festival at least alludes to the variety and quality of instruments that can be found in our city's churches. March 25 at 8: Simon Preston (formerly the organist and master of the choristers at Westminster Abbey) performs on New York's largest pipe organ, a 225-rank Aeolian-Skinner instrument. His concert includes works by Bach, Reger, and Ives, as well as transcriptions of pieces by Wagner and John Philip Sousa. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. Admission by contribution.). . . ¶ March 26 at 8: Anthony Newman plays Bach, Franck, and an original work on the neo-Baroque von Beckerath tracker-action organ of St. Michael's Church. (Amsterdam Ave. at 99th St. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.). . . ¶ March 29 at 4: David Schrader, the organist of the Chicago Symphony, joins the Collegium Antiquum chamber orchestra and chorus (conducted by Mary Jane Newman) in a concert that parallels what might have been heard of a Sunday at the Salzburg Cathedral in Mozart's day. His instrument: a chamber-style tracker-action organ by Schlicker, tuned to a representative pitch of the period (approximately a quarter-tone lower than today's standard). (St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway at Fulton St. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

Charles Libove and Nina Lugovoy—At Merkin Concert Hall. March 25 at 8: The violinist and the pianist join harpist Isabelle Moretti in performing chamber works. . . . ¶ April 1 at 8: Sonatas by Mozart, Copland, Dohnányi, and Alun Hoddinott (the last being a première).

Bargemusic—Presenting Chopin's G-Minor Cello Sonata and piano trios by Smetana (also in

MUSIC—Cont'd

G Minor) and Beethoven (Op. 1, No. 1). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. March 26 at 7:30 and March 29 at 4.)

Mozart on Period Instruments—Fortepianist Steven Lubin is joined by seven string and wind players for a concert that includes the "Kegelstatt" Trio (for clarinet, viola, and piano) and the Quintet in E-Flat for Piano and Winds. (Alice Tully Hall. March 26 at 8.)

More Mozart on Period Instruments—Fortepianist Max Barros performs Mozart's D-Major Sonata (K. 311), violinist Elizabeth Field joins him for the Sonata in B-Flat (K. 454), and cellist Loretta O'Sullivan assists in two trios (K. 542 and K. 548). (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. March 26 at 8. For information about tickets, call 757-3892.)

Cho-Liang Lin and Friends—The violinist is joined by four musical colleagues in works by Prokofiev, Dohnányi, and Schumann (his Piano Quintet). (Taipei Theatre, 1221 Sixth Ave., at 48th St., Concourse 2. 373-1850. March 27-28 at 7:30.)

Lindsay String Quartet—Performing quartets by Mozart (K. 575), Beethoven (Op. 18, No. 4), and Ravel. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. March 27 at 8.)

Julian Bream—The classical guitarist performs works by Frescobaldi and Bach, among others. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. March 28 at 8.)

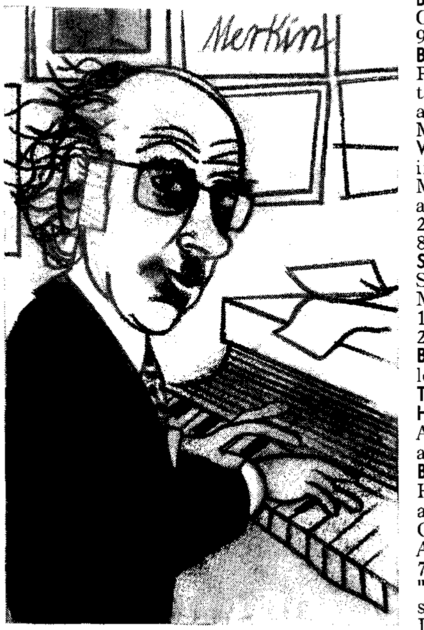
Guarneri Quartet—Playing Beethoven—early, middle, and late: the String Quartets Op. 18, No. 2; Op. 59, No. 3; and Op. 127. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. March 28 at 8.)

Ufonia—The instrumental ensemble plays works by one of its members, the classical guitarist Benjamin Verdery. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 28 at 8.)

Elly Ameling—The Dutch soprano presents a Schubert Liederabend, assisted by pianist Rudolf Jansen. (Alice Tully Hall. March 29 at 3.)

Ensemble Instrumental d'Avignon—The chamber group plays works by Fauré, Debussy, Roussel, Milhaud, and others. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. March 29 at 3.)

London Baroque—The early-instrument quartet performs chamber music by Johann Sebastian Bach and his four musical sons. Commentators have often lumped the sons' output into an undifferentiated mass: unfairly so, since each displays a distinct musical personality. Carl Philipp Emanuel, the most prodigiously gifted, often evinces a brooding introspection, as in a piece on this concert, a programmatic trio sonata describing the humors (which our eighteenth-century forebears believed to be the physiological explanation for moods and attitudes). Johann Christoph Friedrich offers unpretentious delights, while Wilhelm Friedemann (the eldest, who suffered from alcoholism, or schizophrenia, or both) tends toward the erratic. The most popular in his day was the youngest, Johann Christian, who moved to England and paved the way for the galant style from which Mozart evolved. Presented by Music Before 1800. (Corpus Christi Church, W. 121st St., just east of Broadway. 666-0675. March 29 at 4.)



Dick Hyman

Ding-Dong—As a part of the sixteenth annual English Handbell Festival, a hundred bell ringers (backed up by organ, brass, and carillon) will evoke melodies that range from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony to "Hava Nageela." (Riverside Church, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. March 29 at 4. Admission by contribution.)

Boston Camerata—Joel Cohen directs medieval Sephardic music. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 29 at 7.)

P. D. Q. Bach and Accomplices—Violinist Itzhak Perlman and cellist Yo-Yo Ma join the unabashed Professor Peter Schickele and his cohorts in a benefit musical frolic. Among the works to be sacrificed are the "Suite No. 2 for Cello All By Its Lonesome" and the "Fuga Meshuga" (for instrumental quartet and celebrity page-turners). The evening will mark Professor Schickele's début performing on the violin, an instrument he had not yet begun to study when we went to press; still, one can always hope for the best, and, in any case, it's for a good cause. Silly costumes optional. (Carnegie Hall. April 1 at 7.)

Setsuko Tanigami—In her New York début, the soprano, who has proved successful in numerous competitions in her native Japan, sings a brief recital of songs and arias by Mozart, Bellini, Wagner, and others. (Weill Recital Hall. April 1 at 7.)

Chamber Players of the League/ISCM—Presenting works by Babbitt, Stockhausen, Bülent Arel, and other contemporary composers. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. April 1 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Four Nations Ensemble—The period-instrument players present eighteenth-century music from Spain (or at least music with a Spanish flavor). Guests include harpsichordist Kent Tritle (who will collaborate with his fellow-harpsichordist Andrew Appel in music by Antonio Soler) and countertenor Drew Minter (who will perform arias by Johann Adolph Hasse and Attilio Ariosti: the very pieces that, every night for twenty years, the manic-depressive King Philip V ordered sung before he would go to bed. (Friends Meeting House, 15 Rutherford Pl., between Second and Third Aves. April 1 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK
PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Queen Latifah and Naughty by Nature—The Nature boys may be having the hit singles, but it's Queen Latifah who'll hold the audience's interest. Her R. & B. and reggae-rap variations, and her use of great soul grooves, make Queen Latifah one of the most percolating of hip-hop stars. Her latest release, "Nature of a Sista'," is smart, sexy, and straightforward; along with her collaborators (Naughty by Nature among them), the Queen has fashioned some of the most soulful music since "Superfly." (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 864-0372. March 28 at 7 and 11.)

Harry Connick, Jr., and His Orchestra—Paramount, Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. March 23-24, March 26-28, and March 30-31, all at 8. Through April 7.)

Bryan Adams—Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 794-9300. March 25 at 7:30.

Billy Taylor Trio—With Phil Woods. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. March 26 at 7.)

Wayne Horvitz—Performing solo, and with Butch Morris, Samm Bennett, and Ikue Mori. (Roulette, 228 West Broadway. 219-8242. March 26 at 9.)

Soldier String Quartet—St. Ann's Church, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn. 1-718 858-2424. March 27 at 8.

Blue Gene Tyranny—Roulette. March 27 at 9.

The Horse Flies and the Hank Roberts Band—St. Ann's Church. March 28 at 8.

Betty Carter—Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. March 28 at 8. . . . ¶ Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 134th St. 650-7100. March 29 at 3.

"Heavenly Jazz"—Presenting Danilo Perez, Jesse Davis, and George Mraz. (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. March 29 at 5. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

James Newton—CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th St. March 29 at 5:30. Tickets at the door on the evening of the concert.

Dick Hyman—With Kenny Davern. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. March 31 at 8.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Rangers—Vs. the Philadelphia Flyers, March 25 at 7:30.

Islanders—Vs. the San Jose Sharks, March 26 at 7:35. . . . ¶ Vs. the Rangers, March 28 at 5:05. . . . ¶ Vs. the Detroit Red Wings, March 29 at 5:05.

Devils—Vs. the San Jose Sharks, March 24 at 7:35. . . . ¶ Vs. the Boston Bruins, March 26 at 7:35. . . . ¶ Vs. the Quebec Nordiques, March 28 at 1:35. . . . ¶ Vs. the Washington Capitals, April 1 at 7:35.

Knicks—Vs. the Orlando Magic, March 24. . . . ¶ Vs. the Chicago Bulls, March 31. (Game time, 7:30.)

Nets—Vs. the Charlotte Hornets, March 23. . . . ¶ Vs. the Boston Celtics, March 25. . . . ¶ Vs. the Golden State Warriors, March 28. . . . ¶ Vs. the San Antonio Spurs, March 30. (Game time, 7:30.)

(The Rangers and the Knicks play at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; the Islanders at the Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 794-9300; and the Devils and the Nets at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

RACING

Horses—At Aqueduct: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1. . . . **trotting** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8 and Tuesdays at 1. . . . At the Meadowlands: Weeknights at 7:30.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

O Walter! My Walter!—March 26 marks the centenary of Walt Whitman's death, and a number of his fans have orchestrated a series of commemorative events. March 26 at 7: Readings and reflections by Allen Ginsberg, Galway Kinnell, Sharon Olds, and others, and a choral tribute by the Cathedral of St. John the Divine's Choir. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ March 28, starting at 11 A.M.: A marathon reading (twelve hours long) of "Leaves of Grass" and other Whitman works by such notables as Stockard Channing, Stephen Lang, and Viveca Lindfors. With musical interludes. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. No tickets necessary.)

Animal Walk—An event for insomniacs of all ages: on March 26, at 3 A.M., the Ringling Brothers' elephants, horses, camels, llamas, and zebras will be taking their yearly constitutional from the Long Island City train yards, via the Midtown Tunnel, to Madison Square Garden. They should emerge from the Midtown Tunnel at about 3:45.

Flower Show—Cosmos, calendulas, tulips, daffodils, astilbe, iris, sweet William, foxglove, peonies, and columbine, all at the New York Botanical Garden, the Bronx, through May 17. Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 4.

Talks—March 24 at 8:15: Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, the feminist literary critics, talk about Snow White. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440.). . . ¶ March 26 at 6:30: Reno, Dudley Cocke, Samuel Freedman, Craig Lucas, Rosalba Rolon, and David Rousseve talk about art and politics. (New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. For tickets, call 870-1761.). . . ¶ March 26 at 7: Cornel West talks about blacks and Jews. (Jewish Museum, at the New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St. For tickets, call 399-3357.)

Readings—March 24 at 8: N. Scott Momaday, Linda Hogan, and Thomas King read from their own works. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440.). . . ¶ March 27 at 8: Bobbie Ann Mason reads from her own prose. (Universalist Church, 160 Central Park W., at 76th St. For information about tickets, call 875-4128.). . . ¶ March 30 at 8: Eric Bogosian reads from the works of Paul Bowles and David Wojnarowicz. (Promenade Theatre, Broadway at 76th St. For information about tickets, call 645-0905.). . . ¶ March 30 at 8: Lucille Clifton and Thylias Moss read from their own poetry. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440.). . . ¶ April 1 at 6:30: Tony Roberts, Emily Loesser, and Joe Spano read stories by Daniel Meltzer, Marga Minko, and Nadine Gordimer. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1			

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 24.

Laurence Olivier's Maxim de Winter, in "Rebecca" (playing March 29, at Theatre 80 St. Marks), may be made of bits and pieces (the part was better suited for the intended star, Ronald Colman). But what bits, and what pieces! Olivier hooks you right at the beginning, when he's leaning over the edge of a cliff near Monte Carlo and the outcry of the unnamed heroine, played by Joan Fontaine, breaks his suicidal concentration. The light-comedy scenes that ensue, in which he woos the naïve, awkward Fontaine, a paid companion to the awesomely snobbish Florence Bates, are irresistibly droll. "She's spoiled, Mr. de Winter, that's her trouble," says Bates. "Most girls would give their eyes for a chance to see Monte." De Winter replies, "Wouldn't that rather defeat the purpose?" Throughout, Olivier's disconnected haughtiness sets off Fontaine's artful artlessness. Fontaine is perfect in a difficult part—she gives the impression of stripping her feelings bare while modulating them stunningly. She provides the romantic core for this twisted Cinderella story, in which a lowly, virtuous lass marries a dashing aristocrat, moves to his death-haunted estate, Manderley, and somehow manages to save his soul.

"Rebecca" is a tribute to collaboration, not merely among the actors (including Judith Anderson as Manderley's evil housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers, and George Sanders as the roguish Jack Favell) but also between producer David O. Selznick and director Alfred Hitchcock, who made his Hollywood début with this 1940 hit (the only Hitchcock film to win the Academy Award for best picture). Selznick insisted that Hitchcock hew closely to Daphne du Maurier's best-selling novel. As spiffed up by the screenwriters (Robert E. Sherwood and Joan Harrison), the dialogue has a surprising amount of snap. And Hitchcock subsumes his visual playfulness in the storytelling. His camera dances with Fontaine's wallflower—and makes you feel like cheering when she blooms. "Rebecca" tempers the trademark Selznick plushness with the trademark Hitchcock tension. This stately yet scintillating film has the texture of stretched velvet.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "Edward II" (directed by Derek Jarman).
Theatre 2: "American Dream" (†).
Theatre 3: "Mississippi Masala" (Mira Nair), with Denzel Washington and Sarita Choudhury.
Theatre 4: "Where Angels Fear to Tread" (Charles Sturridge), with Helena Bonham Carter, Judy Davis, Rupert Graves, Giovanni Guidelli, Barbara Jefford, and Helen Mirren.
Theatre 5: Through March 26: "Until the End of the World" (Wim Wenders), with William Hurt. From March 27: "Roadside Prophets" (Abbe Wool), with John Doe and Adam Horovitz.
Theatre 6: "Proof" (Jocelyn Moorhouse).

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
March 23: Theatre closed.
March 24-26: (Separate admissions) "The Puerto Rican Mambo (Not a Musical)" (Ben Model), with Luis Caballero; "Finzan" (1990, Cheik Oumar Sissoko; in Bambara); and "The Guardian and His Poet" (1978, Percy Adlon; in German).
March 27-29: (Separate admissions) "The Puerto Rican Mambo (Not a Musical)"; "Finzan"; and "The Swing" (1983, Adlon; in German).
March 30: Theatre closed.
From March 31: (Separate admissions) "The Puerto Rican Mambo (Not a Musical)"; "Finzan"; and "The Five Last Days" (1982, Adlon; in German), with Irm Hermann and Lena Stolze.

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "My Cousin Vinny" (Jonathan Lynn), with Joe Pesci, Ralph Macchio, Marisa Tomei, Mitchell Whitfield, and Fred Gwynne.
Theatre 2: "Basic Instinct" (Paul Verhoeven), with Michael Douglas and Sharon Stone.
Theatre 3: (Matinées only) "Naked Lunch" (David Cronenberg), with Peter Weller; and (evenings only) "My Cousin Vinny."

Loews Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: "JFK" (†).
Theatre 2: "Wayne's World" (†).
Theatre 3: "Shadows and Fog" (Woody Allen).
Theatre 4: "The Mambo Kings" (†).
Theatre 5: Through March 26: "Bugsy" (†). From March 27: "Ladybugs" (Sidney J. Furie), with Rodney Dangerfield.
Theatre 6: Through March 26: "Shadows and Fog." From March 27: "Ruby" (John Mackenzie), with Danny Aiello.
Theatre 7: Through March 26: "Wayne's World" (†). From March 27: "The Power of One" (John G. Avildsen), with Stephen Dorff, Armin Mueller-Stahl, John Gielgud, and Morgan Freeman.

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: "Kafka" (Steven Soderbergh), with Jeremy Irons.
Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "The Adventures of the Great Mouse Detective," a Disney animated film; and (evenings only) "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (Curtis Hanson), with Rebecca De Mornay, Annabella Sciorra, and Matt McCoy.
Theatre 3: "Daughters of the Dust" (1991, Julie Dash).
Theatre 4: "Noises Off" (Peter Bogdanovich), with Michael Caine, Carol Burnett, Julie Hagerty, John Ritter, Nicollette Sheridan, Christopher Reeve, Marilu Henner, Mark Linn-Baker, and Denholm Elliott.
Theatre 5: "Hear My Song" (†).
Theatre 6: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).
Theatre 7: "Shakes the Clown" (Bobcat Goldthwait), with Goldthwait.

Loews 19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "Basic Instinct" (Paul Verhoeven), with Michael Douglas and Sharon Stone.
Theatre 2: "The Lawnmower Man" (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan.
Theatre 3: "The Prince of Tides" (†).
Theatre 4: "Basic Instinct."
Theatre 5: "Final Analysis" (Phil Joanou), with Richard Gere and Kim Basinger.
Theatre 6: "Article 99" (†).

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
"Grand Canyon" (†).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
Through March 26: "The Lawnmower Man" (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan.
From March 27: "White Men Can't Jump" (Ron Shelton), with Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson.

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: "Once Upon a Crime" (Eugene Levy), with John Candy, James Belushi, Cybill Shepherd, Sean Young, Richard Lewis, Ornella Muti, Giancarlo Giannini, and George Hamilton.
Theatre 2: "American Me" (†).
Theatre 3: "Noises Off" (Peter Bogdanovich), with Michael Caine, Carol Burnett, Julie Hagerty, John Ritter, Nicollette Sheridan, Christopher Reeve, Marilu Henner, Mark Linn-Baker, and Denholm Elliott.
Theatre 4: "Bugsy" (†).

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "Wayne's World" (†).
Theatre 2: "Basic Instinct" (Paul Verhoeven), with Michael Douglas and Sharon Stone.
Theatre 3: Through March 26: "Article 99" (†). From March 27: "Ladybugs" (Sidney J. Furie), with Rodney Dangerfield.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"My Cousin Vinny" (Jonathan Lynn), with Joe Pesci, Ralph Macchio, Marisa Tomei, Mitchell Whitfield, and Fred Gwynne.

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
"Bugsy" (†).

Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: "Grand Canyon" (†).
Theatre 2: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).

Crown Gotham, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"My Cousin Vinny" (Jonathan Lynn), with Joe Pesci, Ralph Macchio, Marisa Tomei, Mitchell Whitfield, and Fred Gwynne.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Where Angels Fear to Tread" (Charles Sturridge), with Helena Bonham Carter, Judy Davis, Rupert Graves, Giovanni Guidelli, Barbara Jefford, and Helen Mirren.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: Through March 26: "Gladiator" (Rowdy Herrington), with James Marshall and Cuba Gooding, Jr. From March 27: "White Men Can't Jump" (Ron Shelton), with Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson.
Theatre 2: "American Me" (†).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Final Analysis" (Phil Joanou), with Richard Gere and Kim Basinger.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Fried Green Tomatoes" (†).
Theatre 2: Through March 26: "This Is My Life" (†). From March 27: "The Power of One" (John G. Avildsen), with Stephen Dorff, Armin Mueller-Stahl, John Gielgud, and Morgan Freeman.

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "Noises Off" (Peter Bogdanovich), with Michael Caine, Carol Burnett, Julie Hagerty, John Ritter, Nicollette Sheridan, Christopher Reeve, Marilu Henner, Mark Linn-Baker, and Denholm Elliott.
Theatre 2: Through March 26: "Othello" (1952, Orson Welles), with Welles. From March 27: "Lovers" (Vicente Aranda, in Spanish), with Victoria Abril, Jorge Sanz, and Maribel Verdu.
Theatre 3: "Hear My Song" (†).

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)
Theatre 1: "Shining Through" (David Seltzer), with Michael Douglas and Melanie Griffith.
Theatre 2: "The Lawnmower Man" (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan.
Theatre 3: Through March 26: "The Lawnmower Man." From March 27: "The Cutting Edge" (Paul M. Glaser), with D. B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly.
Theatre 4: "Memoirs of an Invisible Man" (John Carpenter), with Chevy Chase, Daryl Hannah, and Sam Neill.
Theatre 5: "Article 99" (†).
Theatre 6: Through March 26: "Once Upon a Crime" (Eugene Levy). From March 27: "Ruby" (John Mackenzie), with Danny Aiello.

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "Final Approach" (Eric Steven Stahl), with James B. Sikking, Hector Elizondo, Madolyn Smith, and Kevin McCarthy.

MOVIE HOUSES–Cont'd

Theatre 2: "Basic Instinct" (Paul Verhoeven), with Michael Douglas and Sharon Stone.

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"Under Suspicion" (Simon Moore), with Liam Neeson and Laura San Giacomo.

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "Wayne's World" (†).
Theatre 2: Through March 24: "The Mambo Kings" (†). March 25-26: Theatre closed. From March 27: "Ladybugs" (Sidney J. Furie), with Rodney Dangerfield, Jackée, and Jonathan Brandis.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Mediterraneo" (Gabriele Salvatores, in Italian).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Shadows and Fog" (Woody Allen).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
Through March 26: "Once Upon a Crime" (Eugene Levy), with John Candy, James Belushi, Cybill Shepherd, Sean Young, Richard Lewis, Ornella Muti, Giancarlo Giannini, and George Hamilton.
From March 27: "Ladybugs" (Sidney J. Furie), with Rodney Dangerfield.

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "American Me" (†).
Theatre 2: Through March 26: "The Lawnmower Man" (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan. From March 27: "White Men Can't Jump" (Ron Shelton), with Wesley Snipes, Woody Harrelson, and Rosie Perez.

Loews Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)
Theatre 1: "The Prince of Tides" (†).
Theatre 2: "Wayne's World" (†).
Theatre 3: "Basic Instinct" (Paul Verhoeven), with Michael Douglas and Sharon Stone.
Theatre 4: "Mississippi Masala" (Mira Nair), with Denzel Washington and Sarita Choudhury.
Theatre 5: Through March 26: "The Mambo Kings" (†). From March 27: "Ruby" (John Mackenzie), with Danny Aiello.
Theatre 6: Through March 26: "Article 99" (†). From March 27: "The Cutting Edge" (Paul M. Glaser), with D. B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly.
Theatre 7: Through March 26: "JFK" (†). From March 27: "The Power of One" (John G. Avildsen), with Stephen Dorff, Armin Mueller-Stahl, and Morgan Freeman.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "Noises Off" (Peter Bogdanovich), with Michael Caine, Carol Burnett, Julie Hagerty, John Ritter, Nicollette Sheridan, Christopher Reeve, Marilu Henner, Mark Linn-Baker, and Denholm Elliott.
Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "Beauty and the Beast" (†); and (evenings only) "Grand Canyon" (†).

WEST SIDE

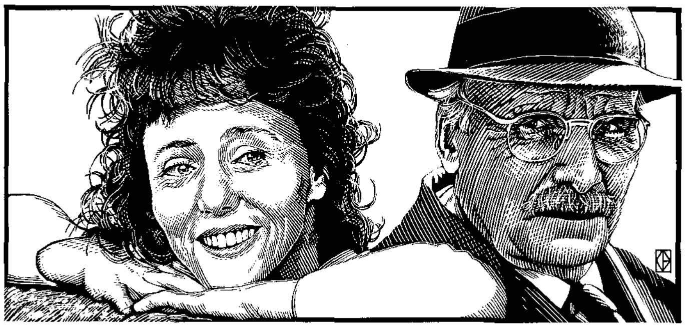
Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through March 24: "Voice from the Front" (1991, directed by Robyn Hutt, Sandra Elgear, and David Neieran). From March 25: "The Ear" (1969, Karel Kachyna; in Czech).
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: "35 Up" (Michael Apted), a documentary.

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: Through March 26: "Once Upon a Crime" (Eugene Levy). From March 27: "The Cutting Edge" (Paul M. Glaser), with D. B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly.
Theatre 2: "Fried Green Tomatoes" (†).

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "American Me" (†).
Theatre 2: Through March 26: "The Lawnmower Man" (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan. From March 27: "White Men Can't Jump" (Ron Shelton), with Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson.

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: Through March 26: "Memoirs of a River" (Judit Elek, in Hungarian). From March 27: "The Puerto Rican Mambo (Not a Musical)" (Ben Model), with Luis Caballero.
Theatre 2: "Europa Europa" (†).
Theatre 3: "Voyager" (Volker Schlöndorff), with Sam Shepard and Julie Delpy.
Theatre 4: "High Heels" (†).

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "This Is My Life" (†).
Theatre 2: "This Is My Life" (†).
Theatre 3: "Fried Green Tomatoes" (†).
Theatre 4: "My Cousin Vinny" (Jonathan Lynn), with Joe Pesci, Ralph Macchio, Marisa Tomei, Mitchell Whitfield, and Fred Gwynne.
Theatre 5: "Wayne's World" (†).
Theatre 6: Through March 26: "Once Upon a Crime" (Eugene Levy). From March 27: "The Cutting Edge" (Paul M. Glaser), with D. B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly.
Theatre 7: Through March 26: "My Cousin Vinny" (Lynn). From March 27: "Ruby" (John Mackenzie), with Danny Aiello.



At Lincoln Plaza, Mireille Perrier and Michel Bouquet in "Toto le Heros"

Theatre 8: Through March 26: "Noises Off" (Peter Bogdanovich), with Michael Caine. From March 27: "Ladybugs" (Sidney J. Furie), with Rodney Dangerfield.
Theatre 9: "American Me" (†).

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (Curtis Hanson), with Rebecca De Mornay, Annabella Sciorra, and Matt McCoy.
Theatre 2: "Bugsy" (†).
Theatre 3: Through March 26: "Gladiator" (Rowdy Herrington), with James Marshall and Cuba Gooding, Jr. From March 27: "White Men Can't Jump" (Ron Shelton), with Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"Beauty and the Beast" (†).

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "My Own Private Idaho" (Gus Van Sant), with River Phoenix and Keanu Reeves.
Theatre 2: Through March 26: "Shining Through" (David Seltzer), with Michael Douglas and Melanie Griffith. From March 27: "The Cutting Edge" (Paul M. Glaser), with D. B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly.
Theatre 3: "Edward II" (Derek Jarman).
Theatre 4: "The Prince of Tides" (†).
Theatre 5: "Grand Canyon" (†).
Theatre 6: "Black Robe" (Bruce Beresford), with Lothaire Bluteau.

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
Through March 30: "The Lawnmower Man" (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan.
March 31 at 6:30 and 9: Benefit showings of "The Cameraman" (1928, Edward Sedgwick; silent), with Buster Keaton. Live musical accompaniment by Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks.
From April 1: To be announced.

Loews Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"JFK" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"The Fisher King" (Terry Gilliam), with Robin Williams and Jeff Bridges.

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Theatre 1: "Mississippi Masala" (Mira Nair), with Denzel Washington and Sarita Choudhury.
Theatre 2: "Madame Bovary" (Claude Chabrol; in French), with Isabelle Huppert.

Loews Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"Howards End" (James Ivory), with Anthony Hopkins, Vanessa Redgrave, Helena Bonham Carter, Emma Thompson, and James Wilby

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"Meeting Venus" (István Szabó), with Glenn Close and Niels Arestrup.

Loews Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"Shadows and Fog" (Woody Allen).

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"This Is My Life" (†).

Lincoln Plaza I, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Raise the Red Lantern" (Zhang Yimou; in Chinese).
Theatre 2: "Toto le Heros" (Jaco Van Dormael; in French), with Michel Bouquet and Mireille Perrier.
Theatre 3: "The Double Life of Véronique" (Krzysztof Kieslowski, in French and Polish), with Irène Jacob and Philippe Volter.

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Fried Green Tomatoes" (†).

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Wayne's World" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Mambo Kings" (†).
Theatre 3: "Basic Instinct" (Paul Verhoeven), with Michael Douglas and Sharon Stone.
Theatre 4: Through March 26: "Gladiator" (Rowdy Herrington), with James Marshall and Cuba Gooding, Jr. From March 27: "Ladybugs" (Sidney J. Furie), with Rodney Dangerfield, Jackée, and Jonathan Brandis.
Theatre 5: "Article 99" (†).
Theatre 6: Through March 26: "Noises Off" (Peter Bogdanovich), with Michael Caine. From March 27: "The Power of One" (John G. Avildsen), with Stephen Dorff, Armin Mueller-Stahl, John Gielgud, and Morgan Freeman.

Metro Cinema I and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "My Cousin Vinny" (Jonathan Lynn), with Joe Pesci, Ralph Macchio, Marisa Tomei, Mitchell Whitfield, and Fred Gwynne.
Theatre 2: "The Lawnmower Man" (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: Through March 26: "Once Upon a Crime" (Eugene Levy). From March 27: "White Men Can't Jump" (Ron Shelton), with Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson.
Theatre 2: Through March 26: "American Me" (†). From March 27: "The Cutting Edge" (Paul M. Glaser), with D. B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "The Mambo Kings" (†).
Theatre 2: "My Cousin Vinny" (directed by Jonathan Lynn), with Joe Pesci, Ralph Macchio, Marisa Tomei, Mitchell Whitfield, and Fred Gwynne.
Theatre 3: "Bugsy" (†).
Theatre 4: "JFK" (†).
Theatre 5: "My Cousin Vinny."
Theatre 6: "Basic Instinct" (Paul Verhoeven), with Michael Douglas and Sharon Stone.
Theatre 7: Through March 26: (Separate admissions) "Memoirs of an Invisible Man" (John Carpenter), with Chevy Chase, Daryl Hannah, and Sam Neill; and "Highway to Hell" (Ate de Jong), with Patrick Bergin. From March 27: "White Men Can't Jump" (Ron Shelton), with Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson.

Embassy I, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
"Noises Off" (Peter Bogdanovich), with Michael Caine, Carol Burnett, Julie Hagerty, John Ritter, Nicollette Sheridan, Christopher Reeve, Marilu Henner, Mark Linn-Baker, and Denholm Elliott.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: "Once Upon a Crime" (Eugene Levy), with John Candy, James Belushi, Cybill Shepherd, Sean Young, Richard Lewis, Ornella Muti, Giancarlo Giannini, and George Hamilton.
Theatre 2: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (Curtis Hanson), with Rebecca De Mornay, Annabella Sciorra, and Matt McCoy.
Theatre 3: "Article 99" (†).

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
Through March 25: "Wayne's World" (†).
March 26: Theatre closed.
From March 27: "Ladybugs" (Sidney J. Furie), with Rodney Dangerfield.

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: Through March 26: "Gladiator" (Rowdy Herrington), with James Marshall and Cuba Gooding, Jr. From March 27:

"Ruby" (John Mackenzie), with Danny Aiello.

Theatre 2: "American Me" (†).

REVIVAL HOUSES

Le Cinematographe, 15 Vandam St. (675-4680)

Through March 26: "Resident Alien" (1991, directed by Jonathan Nossiter), with Quentin Crisp.

From March 27: "Alex" (Teresa Villaverde Cabral, in Portuguese).

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)

March 23: "Jean de Florette" (1985, Claude Berri; in French), with Yves Montand, Gérard Depardieu, Elisabeth Depardieu, and Daniel Auteuil; and "Manon of the Spring" (1987, Berri; in French), with Montand, Auteuil, and Emmanuelle Béart.

March 24: "Scrubbers" (1982, Mai Zetterling), with Chrissie Cotterill; and "Rita, Sue and Bob Too" (1987, Alan Clarke), with George Costigan, Siobhan Finneran, and Michelle Holmes.

March 25-26: "Swann in Love" (1984, Volker Schlöndorff; in French), with Jeremy Irons, Ornella Muti, and Alain Delon; and "The Sacrifice" (1986, Andrei Tarkovsky; in Swedish), with Erland Josephson.

March 27-28: "Monsieur Hire" (1989, Patrice Leconte; in French), with Michel Blanc and Sandrine Bonnaire; and "Babette's Feast" (1988, Gabriel Axel; in Danish and French), with Stéphane Audran.

March 29: "La Lectrice" (1989, Michel Deville; in French), with Miou-Miou; and "The Music Teacher" (1989, Gérard Corbiau; in French).

March 30: "My New Partner" (1985, Claude Zidi; in French), with Philippe Noiret; and "One Woman or Two" (1987, Daniel Vigne; in English and French), with Gérard Depardieu, Sigourney Weaver, and Ruth Westheimer.

March 31: "Old Enough" (1984, Marisa Silver), with Sarah Boyd; and "MacArthur's Children" (1985, Masahiro Shinoda; in Japanese), with Masako Natsume.

From April 1: "Too Beautiful for You" (1989, Bertrand Blier; in French), with Gérard Depardieu, Carole Bouquet, and Josiane Balasko; and "May Fools" (1990, Louis Malle; in French), with Michel Piccoli and Miou-Miou.

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)

March 23: "None So Blind" (1923, Burton King; silent), with Maurice Costello; "Cohens and Kellys in Trouble" (1933, George Stevens); and "The Shamrock and the Rose" (1927, Jack Nelson; silent).

March 24: "The Yellow Ticket" (1931, Raoul Walsh), with Elissa Landi, Laurence Olivier, and Lionel Barrymore; and "The House of Rothschild" (1934, Alfred L. Werker), with George Arliss, Boris Karloff, Loretta Young, and Robert Young.

March 25-26: "The Pawnbroker" (1965, Sidney Lumet), with Rod Steiger, Geraldine Fitzgerald, and Brock Peters; and "Bye Bye Braverman" (1968, Sidney Lumet), with George Segal, Jack Warden, Jessica Walter, Joseph Wiseman, and Godfrey Cambridge.

March 27: "The Producers" (1968, Mel Brooks), with Zero Mostel, Dick Shawn, and Gene Wilder; and "Where's Poppa?" (1970, Carl Reiner), with George Segal, Ruth Gordon, Ron Leibman, and Trish Van Devere.

March 28-29: "Once Upon a Time in America" (†).

March 30: "Surrender" (1927, Edward Sloman; silent), with Mary Philbin; and "The Bells" (1926, James Young; silent), with Lionel Barrymore.

March 31: "Hester Street" (1975, Joan Micklin Silver), with Steven Keats, Carol Kane, Mel Howard, and Dorrie Kavanaugh; and "The Angel Levine" (1970, Jan Kadar), with Zero Mostel, Harry Belafonte, and Ida Kaminska.

April 1: "The Goldbergs" (1950, Walter Hart), with Gertrude Berg, Philipe Loeb, and David Opatoshu; and "Mr. Cohen Takes a Walk" (1935, William Beaudine), with Paul Graetz.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)

March 23: "Juliet of the Spirits" (1965, Federico Fellini; in Italian), with Giulietta Masina and Sandra Milo; and "Il Bidone" ("The Swindlers"; 1955, Fellini; in Italian), with Broderick Crawford, Masina, Richard Basehart, and Franco Fabrizi.

March 24: "Twelve Angry Men" (1957, Sidney Lumet), with Henry Fonda, Lee J. Cobb, and Jack Warden; and "Witness for the Prosecution" (1958, Billy Wilder), with Tyrone Power, Marlene Dietrich, Charles Laughton, Elsa Lanchester, and Una O'Connor.

March 25: "Nightmare Alley" (1947, Edmund Goulding), with Tyrone Power, Joan Blondell, and Coleen Gray; and "The Razor's Edge" (1946, Edmund Goulding), with Gene Tierney, Power, Anne Baxter, Herbert Marshall, and Clifton Webb.

March 26: "Camille" (1937, George Cukor), with Greta Garbo, Robert Taylor, and Henry Daniell; and "Queen Christina" (1934, Rouben Mamoulian), with Garbo and John Gilbert.

March 27-28: "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" (1966, Mike Nichols), with Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, George Segal, and Sandy Dennis; and "Butterfield 8" (1960, Daniel Mann), with Elizabeth Taylor, Laurence Harvey, Eddie Fisher, and Dina Merrill.

At Film Forum 2, Dorrie Kavanaugh and Steven Keats in "Hester Street"

March 29: "Rebecca" (see page 21) and "The Spiral Staircase" (†).

March 30: "Devil in the Flesh" (1987, Marco Bellocchio; in Italian), with Maruschka Detmers and Federico Pitzalis; and "China Is Near" (1968, Bellocchio; in Italian).

March 31: "The Trouble with Harry" (1955, Alfred Hitchcock), with Edmund Gwenn, John Forsythe, and Shirley MacLaine; and "Lifeboat" (†).

April 1: "Chinatown" (1974, Roman Polanski), with Jack Nicholson, Faye Dunaway, and John Huston; and "Cul-de-Sac" (1966, Roman Polanski), with Donald Pleasence and Françoise Dorléac.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Film Society of Lincoln Center (at MOMA)—An international festival of new films by new directors. March 23 at 6: "Five Girls and a Rope" (Yeh Hung-wei, Taiwan and Hong Kong). . . . ¶ March 23 at 9: "Swimming with Tears" (Hirotaka Tashiro, Japan). . . . ¶ March 24 at 6 and March 26 at 9: "Finding Christa" (Camille Billops and James Hatch, United States). . . . ¶ March 24 at 9 and March 25 at 6: "Alex" (Teresa Villaverde Cabral, Portugal). . . . ¶ March 25 at 9 and March 26 at 6: "Lovers" (Vicente Aranda, Spain). . . . ¶ March 27 at 6 and March 28 at 12:15: "Adorable Lies" (Gerardo Chijona, Cuba). . . . ¶ March 27 at 9 and March 28 at 3: "Swoon" (Tom Kalin, United States). . . . ¶ March 28 at 6 and March 29 at 12:15: "Motorama" (Barry Shils, United States). . . . ¶ March 28 at 9 and March 29 at 3: "Satan" (Viktor Aristov, Russia). . . . ¶ March 29 at 6 and March 31 at 9: "Quiet Days in August" (Pantelis Voulgaris, Greece). . . . ¶ March 29 at 9 and March 30 at 6: "Le Ciel de Paris" (Michel Bena, France). . . . ¶ March 31 at 6 and April 1 at 9: "Shadow on the Snow" (Attila Janisch, Hungary). . . . ¶ April 1 at 6: "Hey, You Wild Geese" (Lidia Bobrova, Russia). (Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. For information, call 875-5610.)

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—March 24 at 2 and 9:15: "Triple Bogey on a Par Five Hole" (1991, Amos Poe). . . . ¶ March 24 at 3:45, 6, and 7:45: Three different programs of Philip Haas films. . . . ¶ March 25 at 2 and 8:30, March 27 at 6, March 29 at 2, and March 31 at 8:30: "The Magic Flute" (1975, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). . . . ¶ March 25 at 4:30 and March 27 at 2 and 8:30: "La Méridienne" (1988, Jean-François Amiguet). . . . ¶ March 25 at 6:15, March 28 at 9:45, and March 30 at 2: "Journey of Hope" (1990, Xavier Koller). . . . ¶ March 26 at 2 and 8 and March 28 at 5:45: "Alpine Fire" (1985, Fredi M. Murer). . . . ¶ March 26 at 4:30 and 6:15 and March 31 at 2: "Same to You" (1987, Anja Franke, Dani Levy, and Helmut Berger). . . . ¶ March 27 at 3:45 and 10:15 and March 29 at 9: "Always and Forever" (1990, Samir). . . . ¶ March 28 at 2: "The Magic Violin" (1988, Adam Nadler). . . . ¶ March 28 at 4 and 8 and March 29 at 4:30: "Killer from Florida" (1983, Klaus Schatthauser) and "The Way Things Go" (1987, Peter Fischli and David Weiss). . . . ¶ March 29 at 6:15, March 31 at 5:45, and April 1 at 2: "Arthur Rimbaud, a Biography" (1991, Richard Dindo). . . . ¶ March 30 at 4:15 and 6: "Happy End" (1987, Marcel Schüpbach). . . . ¶ March 31 at 3:45 and April 1 at 7:30: "Journey Into the Interior" (1988, Matthias von Gunten). . . . ¶ April 1 at 5:45 and 9:15: "Peasant Chronicle" (1990, Jacqueline Veuve).

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—A Dennis Potter retrospective. March 26 at 5:30, March 27 at 6, and March 28 at 2:30: "Only Make Believe" (1973, BBC), with Keith Barron and Georgina Hale; and "Double Dare" (1976, BBC), with Alan Dobie and Kika Markham. . . . ¶ March 29 at 2:30: "Follow the Yellow Brick Road" (1972, BBC), with Denholm Elliott, Billie Whitelaw, Michele Dotrice, and Dennis Waterman; and "Double Dare."

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—"Masters of Cinematography: A Vittorio Storaro Retrospective." March 28 at 1: "Tucker: The Man and His Dream" (1988, Francis Ford Coppola), with Jeff Bridges. . . . ¶ March 28 at 4: "Reds" (†). . . . ¶ March 29 at 2: "Dick Tracy" (1990, Warren Beatty), with Beatty and Madonna. . . . ¶ March 29 at 4:30: "Immortality" (1992, Luigi Bazzoni; in Italian).

Symphony Space, B'way at 95th St. (864-5400)—March 23 at 7:30: "Ludwig" (1973, Luchino Visconti; in Italian), with Helmut Berger, Romy Schneider, Trevor Howard, and Silvana Mangano. . . . ¶ March 30 at 7:30: "The Story of Boys and Girls" (1991, Pupi Avati; in Italian). . . . ¶ March 30 at 9:15: "The Icicle Thief" (Maurizio Nichetti; in Italian), with Nichetti.

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. (517-2742)—Films by Zhang Yimou, director. March 27 at 6: "Code Name Cougar" (1989, in Mandarin). . . . ¶ March 27 at 8:30: "Ju Dou" (1990, in Mandarin).

Goethe House, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (439-8700)—A program of films by Percy Adlon. March 23 at 7: "Celeste" (1981, in German), with Eva Mattes, Jurgen Arndt, and Norbert Wartha. . . . ¶ March 28 at 1: "Sugarbaby" (1985, in German), and Marianne Sägebrecht. . . . ¶ March 29 at 1: "Bagdad Cafe" (1987), Sägebrecht, CCH Pounder, and Jack Palance. . . . ¶ March 30 at 7: "Jean Paul, Fantasy Piece on a Franconian Genius" (1975, in German) and "Herschel and the Music of the Stars" (1985, in German).

Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—A program of six films by Paul Strand. Showings Wednesdays and Fridays through Sundays at 2 and 4 and Thursays at 2 and 5.

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—March 27 at 8, March 28 at 3 and 9, and March 29 at 2 and 7: "Cage/Cunningham" (1991, Elliot Caplan). . . . ¶ March 27 at 10: "Cabiria" (1913, Giovanni Pastrone; an Italian silent film). . . . ¶ March 28 at 5: "Marc Antonio e Cleopatra" (1913, Enrico Guazzoni; an Italian silent film). . . . ¶ March 29 at 7: A program of Swedish avant-garde films. . . . ¶ March 29 at 4: "Assunta Spina" (1915, Gustavo Serena; an Italian silent film) and "Il Fuoco" (1915, Giovanni Pastrone; an Italian silent film).

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

American Dream—Barbara Kopple's documentary, about a strike in a Minnesota meat-packing plant, is a lucid and unfussy piece of movie journalism which manages to be as complexly affecting as a great novel. The story that she tells here is a terrifying one. The workers at the Austin, Minnesota, plant of Geo. A. Hormel & Company decide to go on strike on August 17, 1985, rather than accept a rollback of their wages and benefits. The union, Local P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, is led by a militant president, Jim Guyette, and a fiery free-lance consultant, Ray Rogers. Together, Guyette and Rogers create a terrific spirit of energy and resolve in the rank and file. But Lewie Anderson, a veteran negotiator for the international union, thinks that their strategy is "doomed." As the strike wears on, our reactions to what we're seeing become more volatile. Our hearts are with the pumped-up rank and file of P-9, but our heads, increasingly (and surprisingly), are with the pragmatic Anderson: his anaylsis of the local's chances against the company proves accurate in virtually every particular. The defeat of the stubborn P-9ers is agonizing to watch, and we begin to realize that Kopple's apparently even tone has nothing to do with objectivity or resignation—that it is, rather, the exaggerated calm of deep shock, the voice of an eyewitness to a smashup on the highway. The movie embodies a kind of tragic understanding of American life—tragic in the original and the fullest sense, in which the spectacle of unspeakable calamity produces pity and terror and then an unforeseeable and penetrating clarity. This is a masterpiece of social art. Academy Award for best documentary in 1991.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/23/92.) (Angelika Film Center.)

At 8th Street Playhouse, Sandrine Bonnaire in "Monsieur Hire"

American Me—A "Boyz N the Barrio" without John Singleton's warm curbside manner, this movie drives full throttle into the brick wall of reductive naturalism. The story sets out to show how capitalist, racist America pits underclass minorities against each other and corrupts them from within. The film itself is a machine that shreds its characters. Aiming for an ultra-realistic presentation of the formation of the Mexican-American mob, Edward James Olmos, in his big-screen directorial début, arrives at an agonizingly portentous style that's about as "real" as a frozen stare held for two hours and five minutes. The cast includes William Forsythe and Pepe Serna, as the childhood buddies who help Olmos's character found a convict gang whose drug business extends beyond prison, to the L.A. streets. Olmos and the screenwriters (Floyd Mutrux and Desmond Nakano) don't allow anyone a hint of spontaneity or suggest the merest possibility of transcendence. They're too busy over-proving that society's neglected children grow into twisted, brutal adults.—M.S. (Murray Hill Cinemas, Manhattan Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, and National Twin. . . . ¶ Olympia; through March 26.)

Article 99—This derivative, flimsy black-comic muckraker, set in a V.A. hospital, wrings a few laughs from gags out of "M*A*S*H" and ironies out of "Catch-22," then tries to tug hearts and milk applause. The phoniness starts with the title: Article 99 is a fictitious regulation that prohibits coverage of veterans' medical problems if they're not related to military service. Maverick doctors (Ray Liotta, Kiefer Sutherland, Forest Whitaker, John C. McGinley, Kathy Baker, and Lea Thompson) outwit the rules laid down by their officious administrator (John Mahoney). However, us-versus-them farce and melodrama aren't enough for the director, Howard Deutch, and the screenwriter, Ron Cutler; they also want to be positive and inspiring. So the filmmakers ignore the real villains—the men who make national policy—and come up with a not-so-grand finale in which docs and vets unite against bureaucrats and win over the "Inspector General." It's the kind of incomprehensible climax that might be even more excruciating if it *were* comprehensible. With Keith David, as a charismatic paraplegic, and Eli Wallach, who proves that the hambone is definitely not connected to the funnybone.—M.S. (Loews 19th Street East 6, First & 62nd Cinemas, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy. . . . ¶ Loews 34th Street Showplace, and Loews Orpheum VII; through March 26.)

Beauty and the Beast—It's got storytelling vigor and clarity, bright, eclectic animation, and a frisky musical wit. In this Disney version of the fairy tale, Belle (the voice of Paige O'Hara) is a book-reading French provincial girl—a virtuous sort of Mademoiselle Bovary. She dreams of a Prince Charming but gets more than she bargains for when she becomes hostage to the buffalolike Beast (the surprisingly orotund Robby Benson). Underneath his fang-gnashing glower, he's a prisoner of adolescence—unlike Peter Pan, he wants to grow up. He's the opposite of Belle's lunk-headed village suitor, Gaston (Richard White), a narcissistic macho man. Throughout, the Howard Ashman–Alan Menken score is clever and fluid in the best Lerner and Loewe manner, with flashes of oddball humor that keep everything light and bouncy. (Gaston's theme song trumps "C'est Moi," from "Camelot.") There's a great cast of supporting utensils at the Beast's enchanted castle, led by Jerry Orbach in an ebullient vocal turn as the Chevalier-like candleholder, Lumiere. David Ogden Stiers is Cogsworth, the mantel clock; Angela Lansbury is Mrs. Potts, the teapot; and Jo Anne Worley is the Wardrobe. There isn't anything particularly haunting, and not all the script's variations are fresh. But this is easily the zippiest Disney cartoon feature in the thirty years since "101 Dalmatians." Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise directed the screenplay by Linda Woolverton.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, Sutton, and Guild. . . . ¶ 86th Street East Twin. Matinées only.)

Bugsy—This opulent period gangster movie, written by James Toback and directed by Barry Levinson, is largely a showcase for the old-fashioned star magnetism of Warren Beatty, who plays the legendary Benjamin (Bugsy) Siegel. The screenplay portrays Bugsy as a charming, mercurial psychopath with a rather touching taste for glamour; it concentrates on the last few years of the hero's life, when he became a Hollywood celebrity and built the first hotel-casino in Las Vegas. He's a vivid, unpredictable, one-of-a-kind guy, and the filmmakers seem to realize that they can't take their eyes off him for a second. Siegel is a fascinating monster; we don't want to take our eyes off him, either. This is a rich role for Beatty, and he tears into it hungrily. It's the best kind of star performance: Beatty seems entirely himself, but in a new way. He's ferociously, mesmerizingly funny. Annette Bening plays Bugsy's lover, the tough, wily, independent-minded mob courtesan Virginia Hill, and she more than holds her own in her scenes with the star. And the movie is filled with pungent, memorable supporting performances. Ben Kingsley brings a surprisingly dry, elegant sense of comic timing to his portrait of sober Meyer Lansky (one of the hero's partners in the New York mob). Harvey Keitel, as Mickey Cohen, Bugsy's right-hand man in Los Angeles, spits out his profane lines as if they were live firecrackers. Elliott Gould plays the tiny role of Harry Greenberg, an aging, flabby mob schlemiel, and he's absolutely inspired; he plays this dazed character as a Willy Loman who has wandered too far from the old territory. Despite its lavish surface, this is essentially a movie of small, lovingly crafted pleasures. It's smart, swanky fun.—T.R. (12/30/91) (Murray Hill Cinemas, Eastside Cinema, 23rd Street East Triplex, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Loews Village Theatre VII; through March 26.)

Europa Europa—This superb film by the Polish director Agnieszka Holland is based on the memoirs of Salomon Perel, a German Jew who spent much of the Second World War passing for Aryan in an élite Hitler Youth academy. The movie dramatizes this almost inconceivable survival story with a surprisingly light touch. It bounds from one jaw-dropping episode to the next with the speed and the unnerving neutrality of a picaresque adventure, and never pauses to judge its ambiguous hero; it's content to let the ironies of his situation collect around him like reflections in dressing-room mirrors. His family's flight from the Nazis begins in 1938, on the eve of his bar mitzvah. Solly (played by a remarkable young actor, Marco Hofschneider) lands first in Lodz, Poland, and then in the Soviet Union, where he becomes a star pupil in a Communist school. After the Wehrmacht invades Russia and takes him prisoner, he reincarnates himself as an orphaned "pure" German, an Aryan child wandering in the barbaric eastern wilderness. We remain, however, constantly aware (as he is) of what his Nazi disguise conceals—his circumcised penis, the irreversible and unambiguous sign of his identity as a Jew. Holland uses this physical evidence of Solly's Jewishness as the fulcrum of the movie's delicately balanced narrative and moral tensions. In German and Russian.—T.R. (7/1/91) (Quad Cinema.)

Fried Green Tomatoes—Cancer, wife-beating, burning crosses, barbecue, fat-lady jokes at the expense of Kathy Bates, wisdom dispensed by Jessica Tandy, and female bonding that stops just shy of lesbianism. That's the recipe for this clunky, fraudulent, yet apparently crowd-pleasing laugh- and tear-jerker. In the framing story, Tandy befriends Bates and inspires her with the Depression-era tale of tomboy Idgie (Mary Stuart Masterson) and pretty, demure Ruth (Mary-Louise Parker), who discover happiness when they found the Whistle Stop Café in Idgie's small Alabama home town. The director, Jon Avnet, drenches the palate with sweet sauce, then goes for the throat. The only good white males are run over by a train; in this feminist wish fulfillment, it isn't only tomatoes that get sliced. Written by Fannie Flagg (who has a bit role) and Carol Sobieski from Flagg's novel "Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café."—M.S. (Baronet, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, and Regency.)

Grand Canyon—Or, the self-importance of being earnest. Kevin Kline plays an L.A. immigration lawyer who lives as comfortably as a hot entertainment lawyer; Danny Glover plays the tow-truck driver who rescues Kline when his car conks out in a rough black

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section of the city. Kline plots to repay his savior by moving Glover's sister to a better neighborhood and fixing Glover up with Alfre Woodard. Meanwhile, Kline's wife (Mary McDonnell) surges with maternal ardor when she finds a babe in the shrubbery. The director, Lawrence Kasdan, who co-wrote the script with his wife, Meg, pretends to confront the chaos of contemporary urban life: free-floating anger and violence, racial abrasions, the fragility of family bonds. But he keeps breaking the characters' falls with mystical whoopee cushions—a blend of enriched-white-bread comedy and New Age uplift. By the end of the movie, Kline can do no wrong; even the secretary he once slept with (Mary-Louise Parker) lands on her feet. "Grand Canyon" is a liberal soap opera: it manufactures biodegradable suds. Steve Martin provides a few tart moments as a producer of violent action films, but Kasdan punishes the character by shooting him in the thigh.—M.S. (Gramercy, Sutton, and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ 86th Street East Twin. Evenings only.)

HEAR MY SONG—In this small-scale comedy, Peter Chelsom, a first-time director, takes a whimsical conceit and sells it so hard that it loses most of its fragile charm. Micky O'Neill (played by Adrian Dunbar, who co-wrote the screenplay with Chelsom) manages a Liverpool music hall that caters to the local Irish community; the movie is about his attempt to find a legendary Irish tenor named Josef Locke, who hasn't been heard from in thirty years. Micky goes to Ireland to persuade Locke to return to England for a concert; on the home soil, the hero finds himself in a realm of ancient eccentricity and unearthly light, and the movie finds itself in Bill Forsyth territory. Chelsom tries, too strenuously, to evoke the enchanted comic tone of "Local Hero," and Dunbar seems to punctuate every gag with a roguish smile (often shooting one of these twinklers, unconscionably, over his shoulder). The relentless quirkiness is annoying, but the story is, on its own terms, well constructed, and the filmmakers take their fey, sentimental humor right to the limit: you can't say that they don't have the courage of their elfinness. And when Ned Beatty, who plays Locke, is on the screen the picture is nearly as transporting as it's intended to be. His performance is large-spirited comic acting: a pure specimen of Celtic soulfulness, the magical substance that everyone else in the movie has been trying to produce synthetically. Also with Shirley Anne Field.—T.R. (3/9/92) (Village East Cinemas, and Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

HIGH HEELS—Pedro Almodóvar's new movie is featherweight postmodern camp. It's chic entertainment for the fashion-conscious, and it's even constructed like a designer's runway show—this season's collection of naughty notions and candy-colored visual conceits from the House of Almodóvar. As usual, he's trying to combine giddy farce with steamy, over-the-top melodrama. The main characters are a television newscaster named Rebeca (Victoria Abril) and her mother, the flamboyant singer-actress Becky del Páramo (Marisa Paredes). They're the prime suspects in the murder of Rebeca's caddish husband (Feodor Atkine), who is a former lover of Becky's. The movie also features several parodic musical numbers, a subplot involving a female impersonator called Femme Lethal (Miguel Bosé), and a tearjerker ending in which mother and daughter reconcile. The picture's comic inventiveness lacks a unifying idea, an overriding joke. One thing is about as good as another, and nothing is quite good enough. And Almodóvar's filmmaking audacity isn't as bracing as it used to be: it feels trivial. There's no urgency in his perversity here, no challenge in his dissonant effects, no real tension in his wildly intricate plot. This movie is the expression of a personality rather than a sensibility. Also with Mairata Obisiedo, who does a brief, hilarious turn as a police detective's hypochondriacal mother. In Spanish.—T.R. (2/10/92) (Quad Cinema.)

JFK—Oliver Stone's movie means to demonstrate that the assassination of John F. Kennedy was not the act of a disturbed Marxist loner named Lee Harvey Oswald but the result of a vast, complex right-wing conspiracy. The screenplay, by Stone and Zachary Sklar, packs an extraordinary amount of assassination lore into three hours and eight minutes; it also includes a ton of speculative material about governmental misconduct, and quite a few invented characters. The movie is a thick gumbo of truths, half-truths, unverifiable hypotheses, and pure rant, and Stone ladles it out indiscriminately. In essence, the conspiracy theory argued here amounts to a series of inferential leaps proceeding from a speculation (that J.F.K. was killed because he wanted to pull out of Vietnam and end the Cold War). It's all bombast and misdirection, like a courtroom summation by a lawyer who knows that he can't win on the evidence. Stone comes on like a fearless radical, but his attitude toward the audience is firmly in the Hollywood tradition: he tries to bypass the intellect and go straight for the gut. The picture plays like an endless episode of "America's Most Wanted." Its hysterical manner and its slipshod handling of the facts actually have the effect of diminishing the credibility of the case for conspiracy. The clearest sounds we hear in this movie are those of Oliver Stone shooting himself in the foot. With Kevin Costner as New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, Sissy Spacek as his wife, Gary Oldman as Oswald, and an all-star cast of witnesses and conspirators.—T.R. (1/13/92) (Loews Village Theatre VII, Loews Festival, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Loews Orpheum VII; through March 26.)

LIFEBOAT (1944)—Ham-handed, wartime Hitchcock, highly regarded by many, and a big hit. John Steinbeck and Jo Swerling concocted the symbol-laden script about the ordeal of a group of survivors of a torpedoed ship; the script's chief virtue is that it provides a raucous opportunity for Tallulah Bankhead to strut her comic sexiness. The picture made her, for the first time, a popular movie star. She plays a famous mink-coated journalist who develops a yen for John Hodiak, an oiler from the ship's engine room. Others aboard the small boat include Canada Lee as a pickpocket, Henry Hull as a millionaire manufacturer, Heather Angel as a simpleton mother with a new baby, Mary Anderson as a nurse, Hume Cronyn as the ship's radio operator, and, regrettably, in terms of the didactic uses they are put to, Walter Slezak as the U-boat captain, and William Bendix as a wounded seaman.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; March 31.)

THE MAMBO KINGS—Oscar Hijuelos' overlong yet likable novel "The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love," about two Cuban musician brothers who emigrate to New York and land a guest spot on "I Love Lucy," should be prime fodder for the movies. But in the hands of the first-time director Arne Glimcher it becomes the worst sort of varnished kitsch. Glimcher and his screenwriter, Cynthia Cidre, ransack old movies for corner-cutting devices and use them to jack up Hijuelos' nostalgic evocations of the fifties. The result is overpoweringly ersatz—"The Cotton Club" with a Cuban accent. Armand Assante is the fiery brother, Antonio Banderas the sensitive one, Maruschka Detmers a book-reading beauty, and Cathy Moriarty a slangy, sexy cigarette gal. They're all encouraged to be icons; only the engagingly salty and good-humored Moriarty breaks her assigned mold. With Roscoe Lee Browne as a gangster, and cameos by Celia Cruz (as a small-club owner) and Tito Puente (as himself). Michael Ballhaus provided the gaudy, inexpressive cinematography and Stuart Wurtzel the lavish production design.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Loews New York Twin; through March 24. . . . ¶ Loews Orpheum VII; through March 26.)

ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA (1984)—Just about all the incidents in this three-hour-and-forty-seven-minute film echo scenes in Hollywood gangster movies, but the director, Sergio Leone, inflates them, slows them down, and gives them a dreamy obsessiveness. He transmutes the lower East Side settings of those gangster movies to give the genre a richer, more luxuriant visual texture. His widescreen view of a group of Jewish kids who start with petty crime and move into big-time racketeering is set in 1921, 1933, and 1968, but not in that order. His theme is the betrayal of the immigrants' dream of America, and the story begins and ends in an opium den where Noodles (Robert De Niro) puffs on a pipe while episodes of his life of killings and rapes and massacres drift by and a telephone rings somewhere in the past. This epic is a compendium of kitsch, but it's kitsch aestheticized by someone who loves it and sees it as the poetry of the masses. It isn't just the echoing moments that keep you absorbed—it's the reverberant dreamland settings and Leone's majestic, billowing sense of film movement. With Jennifer Connelly, who's marvellously vivid as the young Deborah; Darlanne Fluegel as the beautiful streamlined blond Eve; and Tuesday Weld, who brings a gleam of perversity to the role of a nympho moll. Also with Elizabeth McGovern, who's badly miscast as the adult Deborah, and James Woods, Larry Rapp, James Hayden, William Forsythe, Treat Williams, Burt Young, and Joe Pesci. Loosely based on the novel "The Hoods," by Harry Grey; the cinematography is by Tonino Delli Colli; the score by Ennio Morricone uses "Amapola" as the theme song.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; March 28-29.)

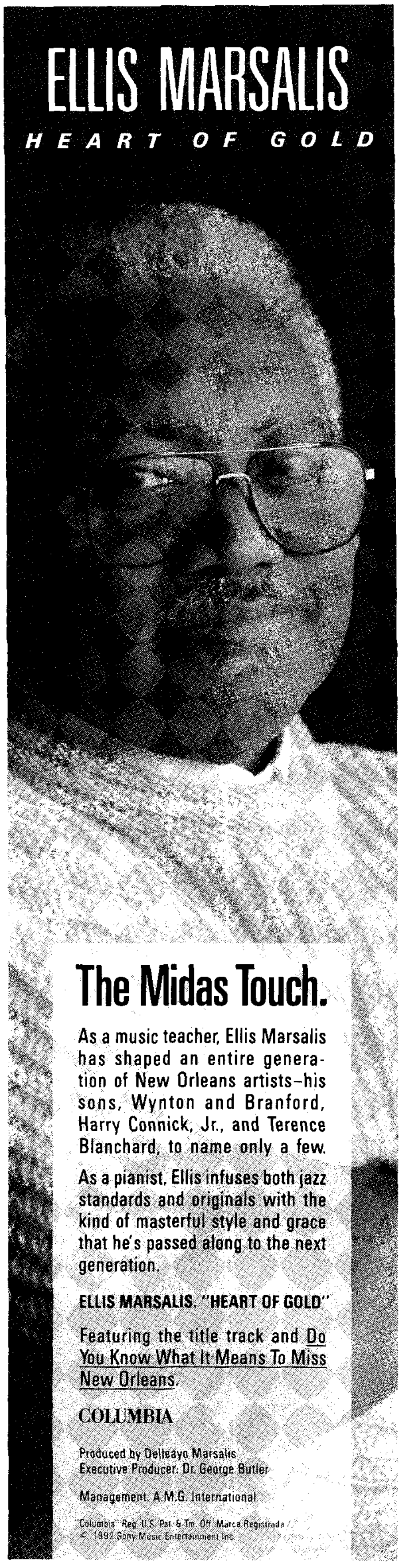
The Prince of Tides—Barbra Streisand's film, adapted from Pat Conroy's 1986 novel, is a big, earnest psychoanalytic soap opera. It's a story in which people come to terms with their past, make peace with the demons that have haunted them since childhood, learn how to let go of the "dysfunctional" emotional patterns inflicted on them by their parents, and become sensitive, caring human beings. Streisand treats this banal material affectionately, even reverently, but it plays better on the screen than it does on the page. Her direction is smooth and canny, and she has distilled the novel to its corn-based essence. But the fumes of the book's terrible ideas linger in the air. After a while, everything begins to feel predictable. Conroy's narrative method (he co-wrote the screenplay, with Becky Johnston) consists of establishing characters who embody common stereotypes, setting them in motion around each other, and then watching them follow the courses that he's mapped for them: his message is one of change and liberation, but his characters' orbits are fixed. As the soul-searching hero, Tom Wingo, Nick Nolte bears the weight of all the movie's ambitions, and, for the most part, he carries his burden with miraculous grace. Streisand plays a sympathetic New York psychiatrist and never seems to get the hang of the role, but most of the cast performs heroically: Blythe Danner, as Tom's wife, and Kate Nelligan, as his mother, are wonderful. This is an admirably scrupulous job of literary adaptation; it's the material that's dysfunctional.—T.R. (1/27/92) (Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews Orpheum VII, and Worldwide Cinemas.)

Reds (1981)—Warren Beatty, who was the producer, the director, and the co-writer (with Trevor Griffiths), also plays the hero, the American journalist John Reed, who took part in the Bolshevik Revolution and wrote "Ten Days That Shook the World." Diane Keaton plays Reed's wife, the independent-minded Louise Bryant. The film, which runs three hours and twenty-seven minutes, is conceived as a love story set against a background of bohemian living and revolutionary fervor. But the writers didn't work out a scrutable character for Louise. In the first half, she's presented as a tiresome, pettishly hostile, dissatisfied woman, and the film moves on the messy currents of sexual politics. In the second half, she is made to set off on a (fictitious) dangerous journey to get to Reed, who has been imprisoned in Finland; she makes her way across the icy tundra in scenes that seem to belong to a different picture (something Zhivagooey), and then the film embraces her, because she's doing what a woman is supposed to do—go through any hardship to be with her man. This second half moves more swiftly but with conventional epic situations and very familiar visual rhetoric. Beatty is often touching, and he does some of the best acting he has ever done, but he doesn't let his energy come through; he plays so much on what the audience responds to in him—the all-American combination of innocence and earnestness—that he's in danger of turning into Li'l Abner. The subject—the romantic life of an American Communist—may be daring, but the moviemaking is extremely traditional, with Beatty playing a man who dies for an ideal. It's rather a sad movie, because it isn't really very good. With Jack Nicholson as Eugene O'Neill and Gene Hackman, Paul Sorvino, the novelist Jerzy Kosinski as Zinoviev, Edward Herrmann, and Max Wright. Best of all: Maureen Stapleton as Emma Goldman, and a group of contemporaries of the Reeds (e.g., Rebecca West, Henry Miller, Dora Russell) who appear in documentary interviews as "witnesses."—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; March 28.)

The Spiral Staircase (1946)—Set in New England in 1906, it's about the activities of a finical strangler engaged in eliminating young women who don't measure up to his ideas of physical perfection. His preoccupation sets him in murderous pursuit of Dorothy McGuire, a harmless, attractive mute who serves as companion to gruff Ethel Barrymore, the bedridden mistress of a spooky mansion decorated with the hides of various wild animals and full of creaking doors, gates, and shutters. Robert Siodmak directed this little horror classic; it has all the trappings of the genre—a stormy night and a collection of psychopaths—but the psychopaths are quite presentable people, and this, plus the skillful, swift direction, makes the terror convincing. With George Brent, Kent Smith, Sara Allgood, Elsa Lanchester, and Rhonda Fleming.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; March 29.)

This Is My Life—The first film directed by the novelist and screenwriter Nora Ephron is a modest, uninsistent family comedy about a single mom from Queens who becomes a famous standup comic and, in the process, strains her relationship with her two young daughters. The movie is consistently good-humored without ever being really funny; the scenes float by on a lulling current of amiability and mild perkiness, and nothing surprising or incongruous bobs up. The picture's wispy, genial not-badness is a little puzzling, because both the material and the cast are strong enough to support a much sturdier and more satisfying piece of entertainment. The script, by the director and her sister Delia, drastically compresses a good 1988 novel (called "This Is Your Life") by Meg Wolitzer; the story emerges from the screenwriters' rapid-weight-loss clinic dazed, unused to its new lightness. The heroine is played by the wonderful, raspy-voiced Julie Kavner, and Samantha Mathis and Gaby Hoffmann, the young actresses who play her daughters, are lively and skillful; none of the performers leave a memorable impression, though. Ephron doesn't go for big vulgar laughs or big vulgar emotions. Most of the time, it's hard to tell exactly what she is going for: the discreet, temperate tone doesn't betray any sense of urgency or purpose. The movie's lack of drive is frustrating, and its well-manneredness is oddly out of keeping with the subject matter. The picture doesn't have the steel or the shamelessness that good comedians need. It's all buildup and no payoff—a shaggy-dog story, not a killer routine.—T.R. (3/9/92) (Chelsea Cinemas, and 62nd & Broadway. . . . ¶ Coronet; through March 26.)

Wayne's World—"Saturday Night Live" has become a repackaging industry. The extended antics of vidiot savants Wayne Campbell (Mike Myers) and Garth Algar (Dana Carvey) betray the same slapped-together quality as the TV specials "Toonces, the Cat Who Could Drive a Car" and "Saturday Night Live Goes Commercial," though the film is not as entertaining. Seen in five-minute spurts on "S.N.L.," beaming out their cable-access program from Wayne's basement, these two come off as cracked bellwethers of the Next Big Things of suburban youth culture, Hard Rock Division. (Their pre-"Truth or Dare" show with Madonna was a classic.) In the movie, Myers still boasts his inexplicably confident and cheery expressions—he's a mischievous smile button. But Carvey overworks his twisted mouth. Wayne and Garth weren't meant to be frozen on celluloid the way they are in this parody of coöptation, which casts them as victims of a manipulative commercial-TV promoter (Rob Lowe). Here they function as leaders of a nostalgia-fest for audiences with short attention spans, paying homage to, yes, "Terminator 2" as well as syndicated TV favorites like "Laverne and Shirley" and "Mission: Impossible." (Sadly, the Tooncinator fails to make a guest appearance.) Carvey has one good bit, playing out a murder with some frosted crullers, and the ever-game Lowe musters up a funny walk after a cop gives him a heavy frisk. Penelope Spheeris directed.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews New York Twin, Loews Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Loews Astor Plaza; through March 25.)



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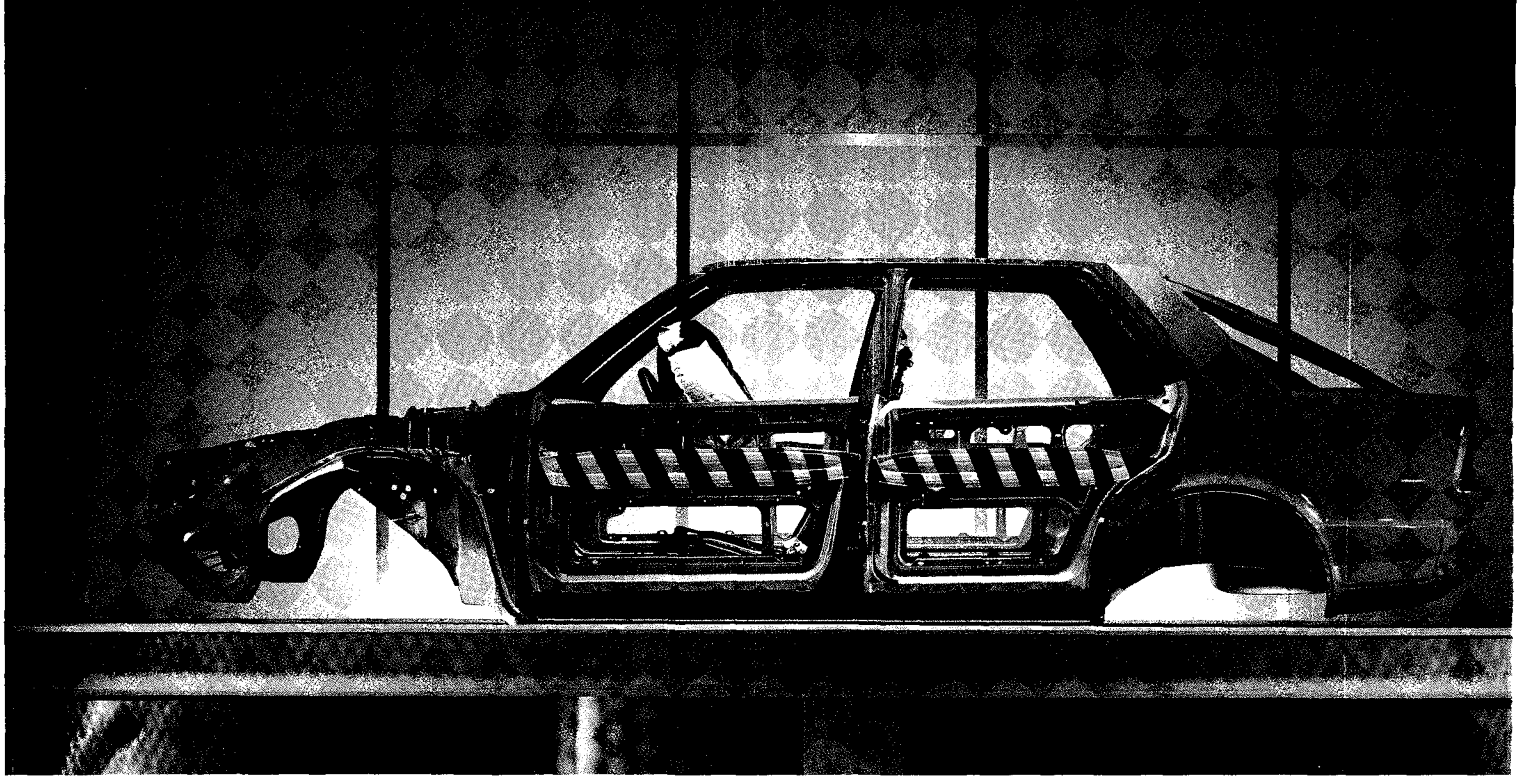

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

LAST week, as President Bush was preparing a major televised appearance to mark the unmet deadline for congressional passage of his economic program, a recently published collection of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's radio addresses known as "fireside chats" arrived in the mail from the University of Oklahoma Press, and we began reading. The historians Russell D. Buhite and David W. Levy, who edited the book, point out in their introduction that the Great Depression was a domestic crisis like no other, and they don't suggest that the fireside chats might offer any guidance for the nineteen-nineties. Yet it is hard to read them and not think that among Roosevelt's ideas there is at least one that a great many Americans would be ready to see revived in the near future: the notion of a Presidential address as a way of actually talking to people about something.

In recent times, the White House has turned to the airwaves whenever there was a need to demonstrate that the President was on top of some worrisome problem, or to smooth the feathers of some irritated segment of the electorate. For much of last autumn, President Bush and his aides responded to every question about the economy by saying, in effect, "Wait until the State of the Union Address." Then, when that speech was finally delivered and polls showed that it had not gone over very well, the White House team began gearing up for another speech—one that would, as more than one Bush adviser put it, "draw the battle lines" between the Administration and the Democrats.

The President has been criticized for abandoning parts of his State of the Union plan almost as soon as he spelled them out. The criticism hasn't had much bite, though, because he made it apparent from the outset that the plan existed mainly for the purpose of being brought up again when, inevitably, Congress failed to adopt it. If its details seemed to have been inserted in the speech at the last minute, it hardly mattered: in a sense, the speech itself was the plan. Listening to Roosevelt, by contrast, Americans never doubted that his proposals had come first and his speeches second; whatever the listeners may have thought of the various components of the New Deal, it was obvious that each had arisen from hard examination of the nation's problems, and that the purpose of the President's addresses was to persuade the country of the need for such measures, and not just to shore up his popularity.

Explaining his unprecedented plan to put hundreds of thousands of people to work building dams, parks, playgrounds, roads, bridges, and buildings, for instance, Roosevelt did not duck the widespread suspicion that such an enterprise would become a boondoggle. There would be waste and fraud, he acknowledged, because "there are chiselers in every walk of life." But he compared the waste that his critics worried about with a form of waste that, in his mind, was far worse. "Demoralization caused by vast unemployment is our greatest extravagance," he said. "Morally, it is the greatest menace to our social order."

Nowadays, political speeches tend to consist of a series of attempts to score with this or that issue; they leap around a lot. In a fireside chat, Roosevelt usually focussed on a proposal or two, and on potential objections. Defending the National Recovery Administration and its concept of government-enforced codes of business conduct—a scheme portrayed by some as creeping Communism, by others as creeping Fascism—Roosevelt pointed out that exploitative working conditions tend to drag all companies down to the same level, since if ten per cent of the nation's cotton manufacturers, say, "pay starvation wages and require long hours and employ children in their mills . . . the fair ninety percent" will have to do the same to stay competitive. That being so, he asked, isn't the country better off if government, business, and labor work together to root out such abuses?

Historians have suggested that the New Deal was, as Buhite and Levy put it, "a lot less coherent and unified than Franklin Roosevelt liked to pretend," and some of its elements—the N.R.A. codes among them—were

AUTOMATIC
SPRINKLER
SHUT-OFF VALVE
FT. OPPOSITE
THIS SIGN

judged harshly in their own time. Five years into Roosevelt's Presidency, unemployment remained around twenty per cent—much closer to its 1933 levels than to those of the pre-Depression twenties. Yet Roosevelt remained hugely popular, and, reading the fireside chats, one glimpses a large reason for his popularity: the impression he conveyed that under his leadership an Administration of smart and well-intentioned people (who cared enough about the nation's suffering so that they never had to say they did) was doing its best to improve things. That message, which shines through in every one of the fireside chats, helps explain Roosevelt's landslide reëlection in 1936, when the basic conditions of the early thirties had barely been dented.

The coming of radio made Roosevelt the first President who could speak to a nationwide audience; and he was a master of a medium that had rearranged the ranks of politicians, much as talking pictures had rearranged the ranks of movie actors. Radio's influence on American politics had been a subject of some anxiety. John W. Davis, the Democratic nominee for President in 1924, had predicted that radio—he could almost have been talking about television today—would force candidates to speak in small mouthfuls, lest "your audience . . . tune out on you without your knowing it." Another danger was underscored by the success of Hitler and Mussolini, who showed that radio could be a very effective means of whipping up a nation's aggressions. But to Roosevelt radio meant the freedom to explain things, and thus the freedom to do things that needed explaining. Is it too much to hope that someday TV will be used that way?

• •

Flowering

WE slipped away to the New York Flower Show last Monday, not telling anyone, so that nobody could say, "I didn't know *you* were interested in flowers," in a dry tone suggesting something prosaic and unflorescent about us—something indehiscent. "Indehiscent" is a new word we've learned. It means "not dehiscent, not opening at maturity," as in "indehiscent fruit." During the blast of freezing cold that has been rattling our windows lately, we have sometimes dehisced in the form of a sneeze, and then hisced up all the tighter. But, of course, a dry or undehisced person, an afloral person, is exactly the kind of person a flower show is there to stimulate, and that's why we went. We took a taxi to Pier 92, one of the big passenger-ship terminals on the Hudson, and paid our eight dollars and breezed in.

We saw rex begonia and asparagus ferns and a plant labelled "A String of Peas"—a plant with leaves that look like peas—and shamrocks, violets, cyclamens, azaleas, Johnny-jump-ups, and battalions of tulips. There were whole gardens, and there were ranks of plants arranged by genus or variety—competing plants, with the prize ribbons beside them, and the judge's scoring card right there for all to see.

Roaming among sections of streptocarpus and primula, we noted how terse were the judge's compliments on the winning plants:

"Magnificent!"

"Superb plant!"

"Spectacular and showy."

"Showstopper."

"Excellent specimen."

"Beautiful."

And how sharp, how barbed, were their comments on the second- and third-place plants and the honorable mentions:

"Good start." (A third-place begonia semperflorens)

"Poor color. Severe pruning is obvious."

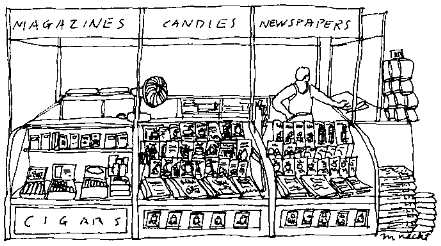
"Unusual growth habit."

"Slightly off-center and overpotted." (A third-place *Andromischus cristatus*)

"This plant would look better with more foliage."

"Lovely plant but a little beyond its prime." (A third-place narcissus)

The withering irony of "This plant would look better with more foliage"! The faint contempt behind "Unusual growth habit"! And imagine the poor grower bringing his best begonia down from Connecticut, an affable man in bib overalls and porkpie hat leaving the tropical calm of his greenhouse for the honk and harangue of New York: his station wagon plows south on the West Side Highway, the begonia terrified and perspiring on the seat beside him, and he parks blocks away and hauls the plant to Pier 92 and sets it in its place and spritzes it with bug juice, and a judge comes by, a big, beefy man with a long waxed mustache, and peers down at it and scribbles "Good start" on a card. How would *you* feel?

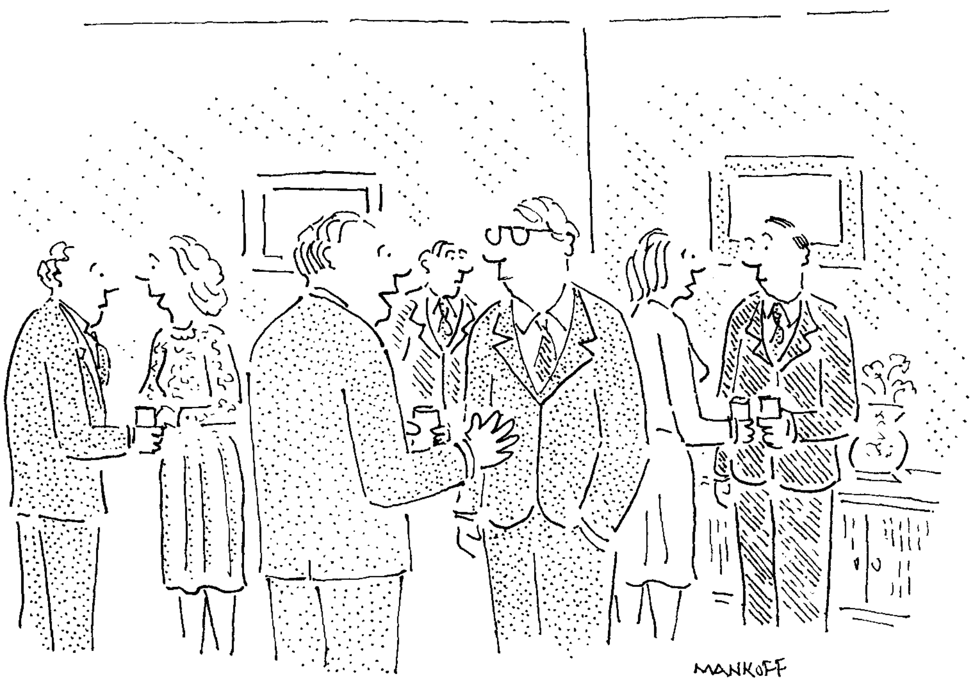


Once in a blue moon, a judge handed out a flowery compliment, such as "Wonderful presentation with bonus of bloom" for a winning *Mammillaria plumosa*, but most of the plants came in for digs. A pot of tulips was criticized for a lack of "floriferousness" and a narcissus for "meager growth." One of the succulents was said to have had "a cultural problem in its development," and a hippeastrum was dismissed as "immature." "Lacks ornamental value," said the card attached to a sea onion. Perhaps, we thought, but couldn't the same be said about us? The remark that the narcissus was "a little beyond its prime" stung us especially.

We had come to the end of Pier 92, and were in front of a ceiling-high window that looked south to the next terminal and to the floodlit U.S.S. Intrepid beyond. The next terminal was where, one afternoon last June, we embarked for England aboard the Queen Elizabeth 2. We stood at the port rail as she slipped down the Hudson, the blocks of Manhattan drifting past like rows of tall corn, and when we got to Forty-third we snapped a picture of our companion with the Chrysler Building coming out of her head like an immense stalk of wheat. A fireboat zipped alongside and shot a fifty-foot plume into the air, the Staten Island ferry bobbed in our wake, our funnel eased under the Verrazano Bridge, and we sailed along the coast of Brooklyn and out to sea.

We normally prepare for a trip by imagining the worst and then are grateful for what doesn't happen to us, so we fully expected cold weather and fierce winds on the crossing, with sheets of salt spray lashing the deck, and the ship rolling and plunging; and we imagined ourself lying on a bunk quietly retching into a plastic bag, and then the inevitable iceberg and the rush for the boats, with us caught in a despicable act of cowardice and going down with the boat in shame and disgrace, and then our obituary ("Was fondly regarded despite insufficient flowering over the years"). But, of course, the first day out was bright and balmy, and we lay in a deck chair and dozed and slowly burst open.

From dread comes dehiscence, just as from winter comes spring. From stern judgments come better begonias. You let a flower show drift toward permissiveness, and soon they'll be exhibiting dandelions and skunk cabbage, and where will we be then? We bought a bottle of soil conditioner and an asparagus fern and went home.



"I'm not sure about Brown anymore, but I'm unwavering in my support of the younger version of Elvis on the stamp."

• •

Henry

JUST about everyone in Cheshire, Connecticut, has an opinion about Henry.

"He's very evasive," Police Lieutenant Myron Verner told the Waterbury *Republican-American.*

"He is so capable," said Louise Bartholomew, the woman who began taking care of him last September. "He really gets around."

"I saw Henry every day for months," said John MacKay. "Sometimes I fed him. But that was the extent of our relationship."

"He is out of his element—he doesn't belong here," said Dorothy Anthony, of the Town Planning and Zoning Department.

"I didn't know him well enough to call him by name," said Richard Pfurr, the town planner. "But I was going to take him home with me."

Starting last September, when he escaped from the annual Grange fair in Cheshire, Henry, an eighteen-inch-tall bantam rooster, spent almost every night in an evergreen tree in the back of a small parking lot adjacent to a shop called The Picture Framer. During the day, Henry pecked around the lot, attracting curious sparrows to nearby bushes and then chasing them away; he strutted up the street and peered through the window of Norm's Barber Shop; he wandered into the front yards of houses along Wallingford Road; and once he was seen on the other side of Route 10, the busy thoroughfare that runs through the center of town. Although many people eager to help Henry tried to sweet-talk him close or lure him with food, he never let himself get caught.

Mrs. Bartholomew, a soft-spoken woman, runs The Picture Framer, and she is without a doubt Henry's best friend. She came upon him pecking around the dumpster at the back of her lot last fall, and held out crackers for him to eat. He was wary and kept his distance. She thought up the name Henry for him right then, because she figured that it would be easier to coax him close if she could call him something. Finally, she tossed the crackers on the ground and walked away. Only then did Henry approach and gobble them up. She brought him cracked corn from the local grain store, and threw apples and pieces of fruit on the ground for him to eat. One day when she had no fruit, she resorted to Fig Newtons: he adored them. "It got so that if I didn't feed him he'd remind me," she said, and she recalled that one day when she was waiting on a customer in the store she sensed Henry staring at her. She turned around to the window and there he was, waiting for his Fig Newtons.

The winter was mild, but hard on Henry. Mrs. Bartholomew remembers some days when he stood alone in the parking lot on one foot, the other tucked up to his breast for warmth. She took out pans of heated water for him. When it rained, he found shelter in a shed behind the dumpster. When it was windy, Mrs. Bartholomew parked her car next to a hedge at the back of the lot, so Henry could huddle between the car and the bushes. She asked farmers how to catch him. They suggested that she use a poultry hook, and explained that she would have to wait until dusk, when Henry was in his tree, and try to sneak up and snare him. "You should see him run and jump," she said. "He can't fly—not like a real bird, anyway. But no one could ever catch him." She couldn't bring herself even to try the snare, and instead informed the press about Henry. Her hope was that a story in the paper would encourage Henry's owner—or, at least, someone who knew what to do with a rooster—to come get him. All hell broke loose. Nearly every local newspaper ran a story about the rogue rooster ("HENRY REMAINS HOMELESS," the Cheshire *Herald* said in a headline), and Channel 8 of New Haven sent its reporter Skip Church out looking for him two days in a row. Henry, who by this time was practically eating out of Mrs. Bartholomew's hand, got frightened by all the commotion, and on Friday, February 28th, he vanished.

Eileen Kraklau was the first person to notice Henry's disappearance. She was accustomed to being greeted by him every morning on her way to work. "He liked to sit in my parking space until I arrived," she said the other day. "He was there that Friday, then he was gone." She thinks that he left because he grew lonely. "Everybody needs somebody," she said. "Maybe he found a mate."

Ernie Berbas, who is Mrs. Kraklau's boss at Connecticut Independent Living, Inc., a company that runs group homes for handicapped and retarded people, felt sorry for the bird. "He was messed up, emotionally disturbed," Mr. Berbas recalled. "He crowed every morning at ten. Aren't they supposed to crow when the sun comes up?" Mr. Berbas once asked his maintenance men to give him an estimate on building a coop for Henry, whom he called Claude (because "he looked like a Claude to me"), and he likes to tell about the time he asked his secretary to go out and get him a sandwich and she came back with a bag of chicken feed for Claude instead.

Over at the town hall, where the offices of the Planning and Zoning Department, on the second floor, provide a good view of what was once Henry's domain, one bird-watcher speculated that he had flown to the old town cemetery, where he could roost undisturbed in the tall evergreens among centuries-old headstones.

Then Mary Denos, who lives on a street near the frame shop, confided that Henry has taken up residence in her back yard, probably to avoid the press. "He is a lovable bird," she said. "My four daughters go out and cluck, and he comes out of his tree." Still, Mrs. Denos wants to find Henry a proper home, and has been in touch with a nearby Franciscan nunnery. Its postulants have now promised to set the wayward bird up with a flock of hens on their farm. That will be just fine with Martha Beale, of Planning and Zoning. She gave us a copy of the paragraph of the zoning regulations which Henry has been violating, and explained, "He should be situated on a lot that's zoned for poultry."

Night Out

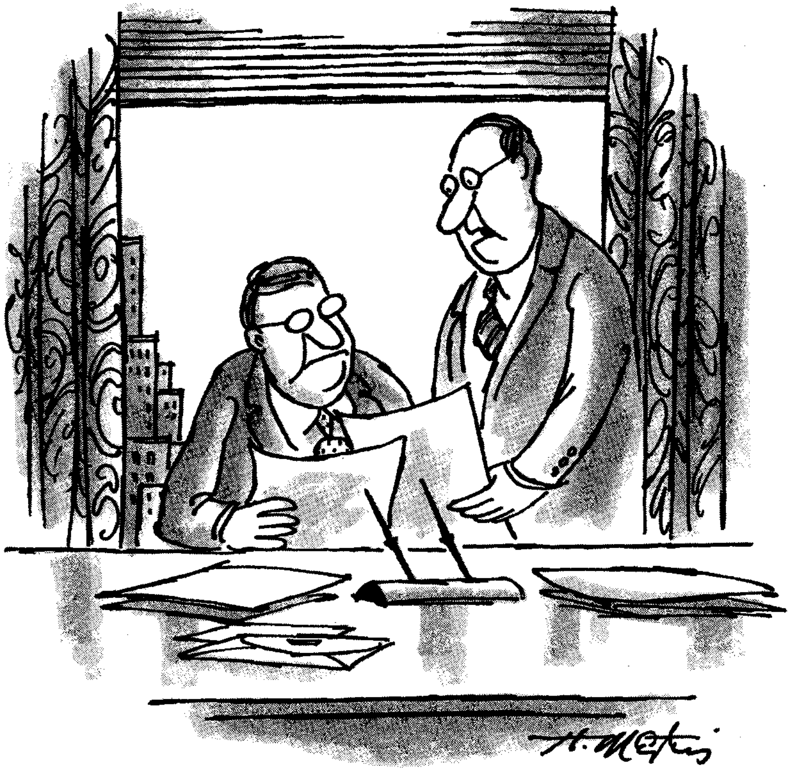
MOST of the parties we've been invited to lately have taken place in one-room apartments on the Lower East Side or in communal student flats on the upper Upper West Side, where the keg of beer is in the bathtub and the plastic cups have been used up long before we get there. So we were pleased recently to be asked to a fête for Yoko Ono at the Vrej Baghoomian Gallery, in SoHo. The occasion was the release by Rykodisc, an independent Massachusetts record label, of "Onobox," a six-CD retrospective of Ms. Ono's musical career. A sticker on the box demanded "Smash your preconceptions!" and, worried that we might be quizzed on the material, we dutifully listened to all six disks, and found we rather liked them. We were expecting to hear something that resembled primal-scream therapy, but what was on these disks actually sounded like music.

The gallery is on the second floor, and to get there we shared an elevator with Joey Ramone; right then, we knew that this was going to be one of those New York nights to write home about. Joey, the lead singer of the Ramones, is probably the tallest and skinniest man on earth. He has so much black hair falling onto his face that standing next to him is like being near a punk version of Cousin Itt elongated by a fun-house mirror. We were Ramones fans in high school—we have pictures of ourself, wearing too much black eye makeup, to prove it—and the elevator seemed the perfect place to tell him so. But by the time we thought to say, "You made life at age fifteen bearable," the doors had opened.

The gallery itself was stark white, with high ceilings and the kind of incandescent light that flatters modern art much more than it does human beings. We noticed lots of people in black, lots of men with long hair, lots of women with crewcuts; we heard lots of foreign accents. Cyndi Lauper—who is *tiny*, it turns out—strode by, with lavender hair twisted into a chignon, and we overheard someone say, "Jeez, what has she done lately besides dye her hair?" At that moment, we felt *blessed to know that our life would* most likely be spent in quiet obscurity.

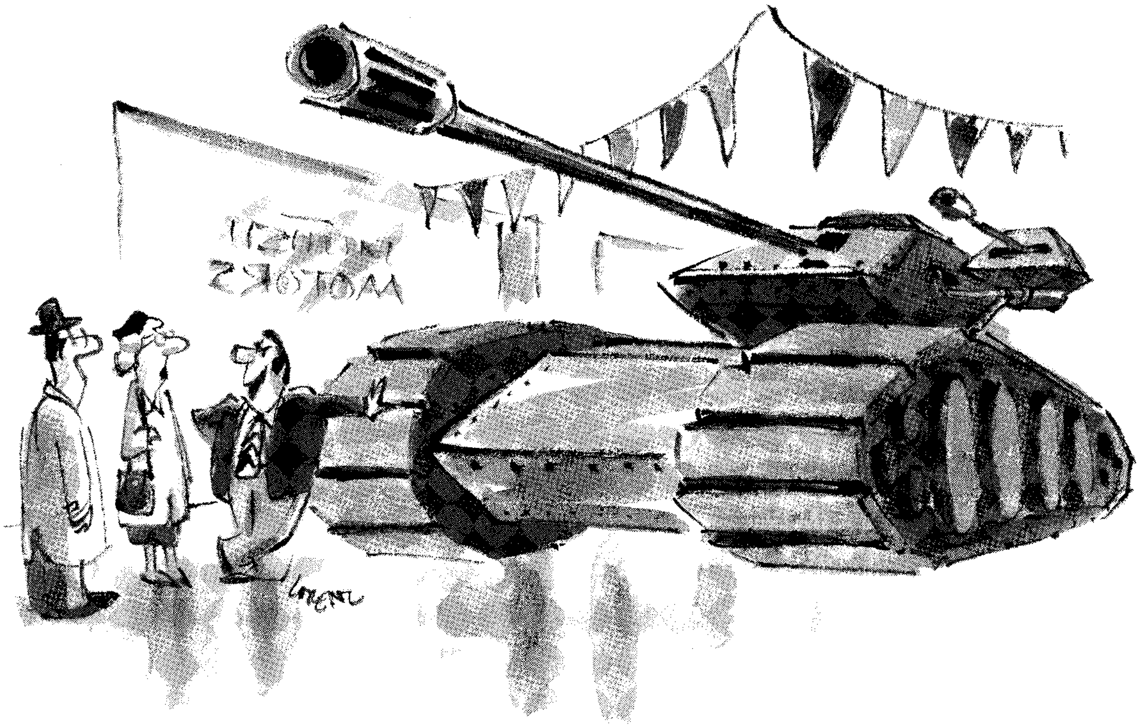
The whole scene reminded us of a movie, and we tried to think which one. We thought of the mod, madcap party, circa 1970, in "Diary of a Mad Housewife"—the one where poor, mousy Carrie Snodgress meets the pretentious novelist who eventually ruins her life. And then we thought of the gallery opening in "9½ Weeks"—the party where Kim Basinger has an apparent nervous breakdown and runs to meet Mickey Rourke. Parties like this, we realized, are a filmmaker's idea of an urban nightmare.

Nightmare or not, we were determined to stay long enough to see Yoko Ono. Yoko is very short, too, and every time we asked someone to point her



"Have you noticed ethics creeping into some of these deals lately?"

out, the person would look around vaguely and say something like "She just went right past you—you just missed her." We saw David Letterman's bandleader, Paul Shaffer, who is even tinier than Cyndi Lauper—we know this because he was engaged in deep conversation with her every time we walked by. We saw the singer Syd Straw, wearing a bright-blue baseball cap, glasses, and no makeup. We told her how much we had liked her début album, "Surprise," and asked when the next one would be out. She frowned, and said, "Virgin Records dropped me. I'll probably never get to record another album for the rest of my life." We decided that it was time to move on before we could ask any more wrong questions.



"Safe, reliable, and made right here in the good old U. S. of A."

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Eventually, Don Rose, the president of Rykodisc, appeared with a microphone to introduce Yoko to the crowd. He said how, at long last, this was music "whose time has come—or, at least, it isn't so far ahead of its time anymore," and everyone applauded. As Yoko posed for pictures with various people, we finally got a good look at her. She had a carefully coiffed short haircut and was wearing wire-rimmed glasses; she looked more like somebody's unconventional aunt or old family friend, we thought, than like a woman who had once made a movie showing nothing but pairs of legs. Sean Lennon, Yoko's son, wandered around the room wearing a magenta military jacket, torn jeans, and motorcycle boots; he looked every inch the rebellious teenager, but, of course, his mother is probably hard to shock.

As we were getting ready to leave, we noticed a strikingly skinny blonde with an angular Nordic face who was wearing white tights and black-and-white checked ankle boots with platform heels. We made some inquiries and found out that she was Kim Gordon, the singer and bass player of Sonic Youth, the downtown darlings of heavy-guitar music, who made their major-label début a year and a half ago with an album called "Goo." One of the people we'd asked, a young man we know who is normally so shy that he hides in the coat-check room during parties, is the biggest Sonic Youth fan on earth, and was actually eager to talk to Kim, and explain why the band's next video project ought to be based on a Philip K. Dick book called "The Three Stigmata" of something or other. Kim was wearing a really great shade of lipstick—the kind of burgundy plum that looks like a real mouth, only darker—so we thought we'd ask her where she'd found it. We ended up talking with her for quite some time about the M.A.C. store, on Christopher Street—a fancy cosmetics emporium where makeup artists and people like Madonna supposedly buy all their creams and crayons. "You know how at most cosmetic counters they're really over-solicitous—like you're trying to buy a lipstick and they end up selling you an entire skin-care line?" Kim said. "Well, at the M.A.C. they kind of act like they wouldn't want some lowly creature like *you*"—she was referring to herself—"actually *buying* anything there." We figured if they can't even be nice to Kim Gordon what hope is there for us?

We must have talked to Kim Gordon for close to an hour before we were torn away by friends and led off to a restaurant on Prince Street that was empty save for refugees from the Yoko party and our old friend J. S. G. Boggs, the artist who makes versions of paper currency that could be construed as counterfeit, except that no one could mistake a dollar bill of the United States of Bohemia for the real thing. Boggs told us that he had spent the last year without money—had persuaded everyone from motorcycle dealers to hotel clerks and check-out girls at K mart to accept his homemade bills in place of legal tender. When the year was over, he said, he called his attorney in London from a New York City pay phone and needed to use more change than he'd touched in three hundred and sixty-five days. He added that many of the purchases he'd made in the year without money were on display at—no kidding—the Vrej Baghoomian Gallery. And he said that the show would be closing that Saturday, which meant that if we wanted to see it we'd have to go back there sometime in the next couple of days. We said we would, but we didn't.

SLEEP

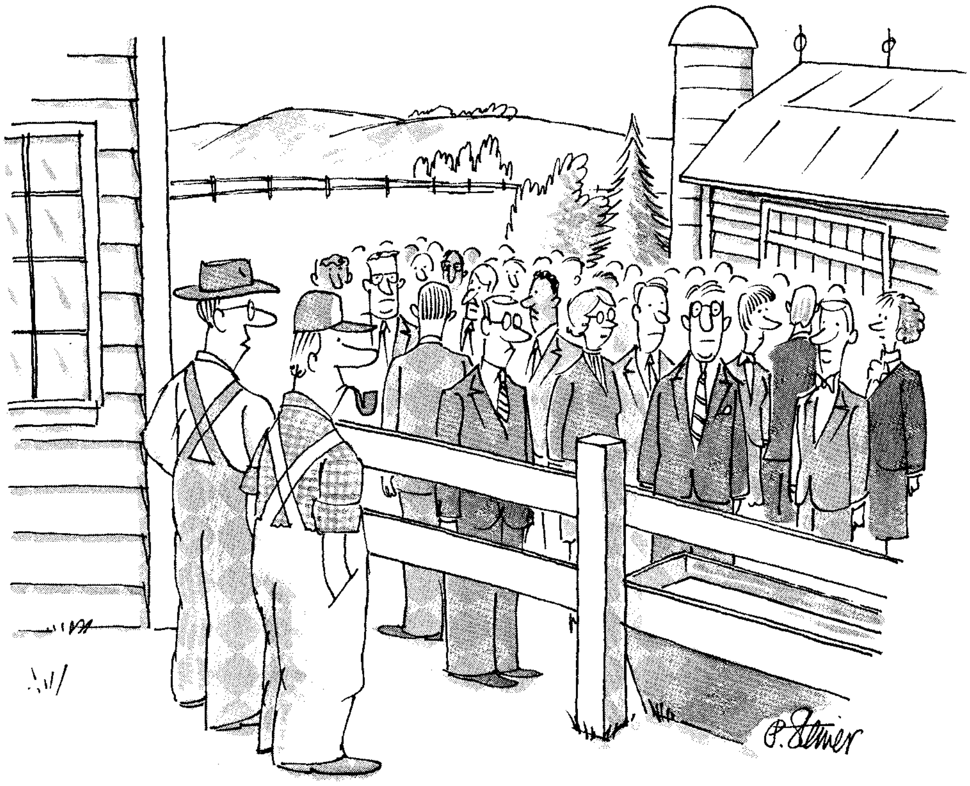
THIS is my seventeenth straight day without sleep.

I'm not talking about insomnia. I know what insomnia is. I had something like it in college—"something like it" because I'm not sure that what I had then was exactly the same as what people refer to as insomnia. I suppose a doctor could have told me. *But I didn't see a doctor. I knew it* wouldn't do any good. Not that I had any reason to think so. Call it woman's intuition—I just felt they couldn't help me. So I didn't see a doctor, and I didn't say anything to my parents or friends, because I knew that that was exactly what they would tell me to do.

Back then, my "something like insomnia" went on for a month. I never really got to sleep that entire time. I'd go to bed at night and say to myself, "All right now, time for some sleep." That was all it took to wake me up. It was instantaneous—like a conditioned reflex. The harder I worked at sleeping, the wider awake I became. I tried alcohol, I tried sleeping pills, but they had absolutely no effect.

Finally, as the sky began to grow light in the morning, I'd feel that I might be drifting off. But this wasn't sleep. My fingertips were just barely brushing against the outermost edge of sleep. And all the while my mind was wide-awake. I would feel a hint of drowsiness, but my mind was there, in its own room, on the other side of a transparent wall, watching me. My physical self was drifting through the feeble morning light, and all the while it could feel my mind staring, breathing, close beside it. I was both a body on the verge of sleep and a mind determined to stay awake.

This incomplete drowsiness would continue on and off all day. My head was always foggy. I couldn't get an accurate fix on the things around me—their distance or mass or texture. The drowsiness would overtake me at regular, wavelike intervals: on the subway, in the classroom, at the dinner table. My mind would slip away from my body. The world would sway soundlessly. I would drop things. My pencil or my purse or my fork would clatter to the floor. All I wanted was to throw myself down and sleep. But I couldn't. The wakefulness was always there beside me. I could feel its chilling shadow. It was the shadow of myself. Weird, I would think as the drowsiness overtook me, I'm in my own shadow. I would walk and eat and talk to people inside my drowsiness. And the strangest thing was that no one noticed. I lost fifteen pounds that month, and no one noticed. No one in my family, not one of my friends or classmates realized that I was going through life asleep.



"*In six more weeks, these M.B.A.s will be ready for market.*"

It was literally true: I was going through life asleep. My body had no more feeling than a drowned corpse. My very existence, my life in the world, seemed like a hallucination. A strong wind would make me think my body was about to be blown to the end of the earth, to some land I had never seen or heard of, where my mind and body would separate forever. "Hold tight," I would tell myself, but there was nothing for me to hold on to.

And then, when night came, the intense wakefulness would return. I was powerless to resist it. I was locked in its core by an enormous force. All I could do was stay awake until morning, eyes wide open in the dark. I couldn't even think. As I lay there, listening to the clock tick off the seconds, I did nothing but stare at the darkness as it slowly deepened and slowly diminished.

And then one day it ended, without warning, without any external cause. I started to lose consciousness at the breakfast table. I stood up without saying anything. I may have knocked something off the table. I think someone spoke to me. But I can't be sure. I staggered to my room, crawled into bed in my clothes, and fell fast asleep. I stayed that way for twenty-seven hours. My mother became alarmed and tried to shake me out of it. She actually slapped my cheeks. But I went on sleeping for twenty-seven hours without a break. And when I finally did awaken, I was my old self again. Probably.

I have no idea why I became an insomniac then nor why the condition suddenly cured itself. It was like a thick, black cloud brought from somewhere by the wind, a cloud crammed full of ominous things I have no knowledge of. No one knows where such a thing comes from or where it goes. I can only be sure that it did descend on me for a time, and then departed.

IN any case, what I have now is nothing like that insomnia, nothing at all. I just can't sleep. Not for

Earthfriends

"The planet's warming up like mad, but she isn't."

one second. Aside from that simple fact, I'm perfectly normal. I don't feel sleepy, and my mind is as clear as ever. Clearer, if anything. Physically, too, I'm normal: my appetite is fine; I'm not fatigued. In terms of everyday reality, there's nothing wrong with me. I just can't sleep.

Neither my husband nor my son has noticed that I'm not sleeping. And I haven't mentioned it to them. I don't want to be told to see a doctor. I know it wouldn't do any good. I just know. Like before. This is something I have to deal with myself.

So they don't suspect a thing. On the surface, our life flows on unchanged. Peaceful. Routine. After I see my husband and son off in the morning, I take my car and go marketing. My husband is a dentist. His office is a ten-minute drive from our condo. He and a dental-school friend own it as partners. That way they can afford to hire a technician and a receptionist. One partner can take the other's overflow. Both of them are good, so for an office that has been in operation for only five years, and that opened without any special connections, the place is doing very well. Almost too well. "I didn't want to work so hard," says my husband. "But I can't complain."

And I always say, "Really, you can't." It's true. We had to get an enormous bank loan to open the place. A dental office requires a huge investment in equipment. And the competition is fierce. Patients don't start pouring in the minute you open your doors. Lots of dental clinics have failed for lack of patients.

Back then, we were young and poor and we had a brand-new baby. No one could guarantee that we would survive in such a tough world. But we have survived, one way or another. Five years. No, we really can't complain. We've still got almost two-thirds of our debt left to pay, though.

"I know why you've got so many patients," I always say to him. "It's because you're such a good-looking guy."

This is our little joke. He's not good-looking at all. Actually, he's kind of strange-looking. Even now I sometimes wonder why I married such a strange-looking man. I had other boyfriends who were far more handsome.

What makes his face so strange? I can't really say. It's not a handsome face, but it's not ugly, either. Nor is it the kind that people would say has "character." Honestly, "strange" is about all that fits. Or maybe it would be more accurate to say that it has no distinguishing features. Still, there must be some element that *makes* his face have no distinguishing features, and if I could grasp whatever that is, I might be able to understand the strangeness of the whole. I once tried to draw his picture, but I couldn't do it. I couldn't remember what he looked like. I sat there holding the pencil over the paper and couldn't make a mark. I was flabbergasted. How can you live with a man so long and not be able to bring his face to mind? I knew how to recognize him, of course. I would even get mental images of him now and then. But when it came to drawing his picture, I realized that I didn't remember anything about his face. What could I do? It was like running into an invisible wall. The one thing I could remember was that his face looked strange.

The memory of that often makes me nervous.

Still, he's one of those men everybody likes. That's a big plus in his business, obviously, but I think he would have been a success at just about anything. People feel secure talking to him. I had never met anyone like that before. All my women friends like him. And I'm fond of him, of course. I think I even love him. But, strictly speaking, I don't actually *like* him.

Anyhow, he smiles in this natural, innocent way, just like a child. Not many grownup men can do that. And I guess you'd expect a dentist to have nice teeth, which he does.

"It's not my fault I'm so good-looking," he always answers when we enjoy our little joke. We're the only ones who understand what it means. It's a recognition of reality—the fact that we have managed in one way or another to survive—and it's an important ritual for us.

HE drives his Sentra out of the condo parking garage every morning at eight-fifteen. Our son is in the seat next to him. The elementary school is on the way to the office. "Be careful," I say. "Don't worry," he answers. Always the same little dialogue. I can't help myself. I have to say it. "Be careful." And my husband has to answer, "Don't worry." He starts the engine, puts a Haydn or a Mozart tape into the car stereo, and hums along with the music. My two "men" always wave to me on the way out. Their hands move in exactly the same way. It's almost uncanny. They lean their heads at exactly the same angle and turn their palms toward me, moving them slightly from side to side in exactly the same way, as if they'd been trained by a choreographer.

I have my own car, a used Honda Civic. A girlfriend sold it to me two years ago for next to nothing. One bumper is smashed in, and the body style is old-fashioned, with rust spots showing up. The odometer has over a hundred and fifty thousand kilometres on it. Sometimes—once or twice a month—the car is almost impossible to start. The engine simply won't catch. Still, it's not bad enough to have the thing fixed. If you baby it and let it rest for ten minutes or so, the engine will start up with a nice, solid *vroom*. Oh, well, everything—everybody—gets out of whack once or twice a month. That's life. My husband calls my car "your donkey." I don't care. It's mine.

I drive my Civic to the supermarket. After marketing I clean the house and do the laundry. Then I fix lunch. I make a point of performing my morning chores with brisk, efficient movements. If possible, I like to finish my dinner preparations in the morning, too. Then the afternoon is all mine.

My husband comes home for lunch. He doesn't like to eat out. He says the restaurants are too crowded, the food is no good, and the smell of tobacco smoke gets into his clothes. He prefers eating at home, even with the extra travel time involved. Still, I don't make anything fancy for lunch. I warm up leftovers in the microwave or boil a pot of noodles. So the actual time involved is minimal. And, of course, it's more fun to eat with my husband than all alone with no one to talk to.

Before, when the clinic was just getting started, there would often be no patient in the first afternoon slot, so the two of us would go to bed after lunch. Those were the loveliest times with him. Everything was hushed, and the soft afternoon sunshine would filter into the room. We were a lot younger then, and happier.

GOLD LILY

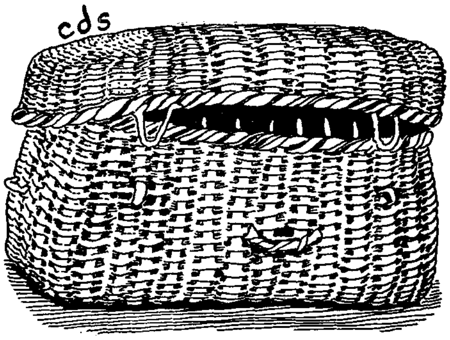
As I perceive
I am dying now, and know
I will not speak again, will not
survive the earth, be summoned
out of it again, not
a flower yet, a spine only, raw dirt
catching my ribs, I call you
father and master: all around,
my companions are failing, thinking
you do not see. How
can they know you see
unless you save us?
In the summer twilight, are you
close enough to hear
your child's terror? Or
are you not my father,
you who raised me?

—Louise Glück

• •

We're still happy, of course. I really do think so. No domestic troubles cast shadows on our home. I love him and trust him. And I'm sure he feels the same about me. But little by little, as the months and years go by, your life changes. That's just how it is. There's nothing you can do about it. Now all the afternoon slots are taken. When we finish eating, my husband brushes his teeth, hurries out to his car, and goes back to the office. He's got all those sick teeth waiting for him. But that's all right. We both know you can't have everything your own way.

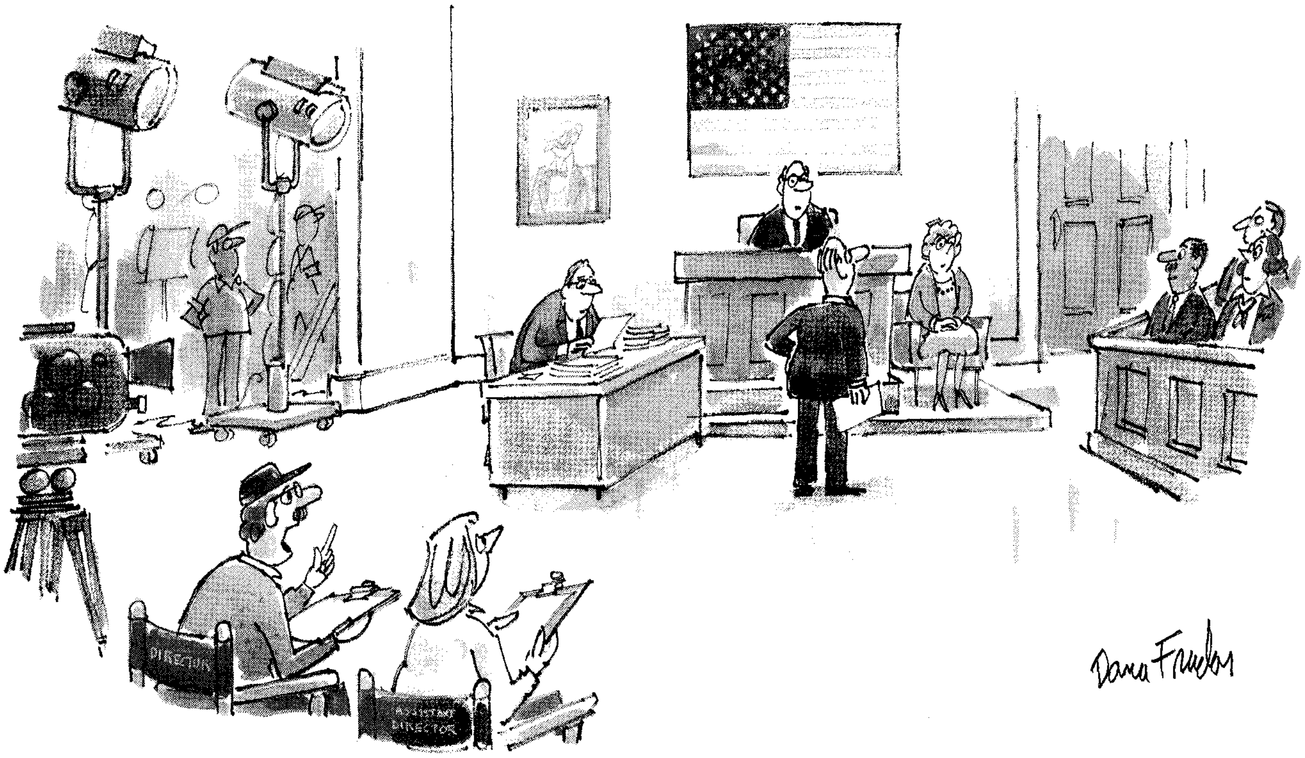
After my husband goes back to the office, I take a bathing suit and towel and drive to the neighborhood athletic club. I swim for half an hour. I swim hard. I'm not that crazy about the swimming itself: I just want to keep the flab off. I've always liked my own figure. Actually, I've never liked my face. It's not bad, but I've never felt I liked it. My body is another matter. I like to stand naked in front of the mirror. I like to study the soft outlines I see there, the balanced vitality. I'm not sure what it is, but I get the feeling that something inside there is very important to me. Whatever it is, I don't want to lose it.



I'm thirty. When you reach thirty, you realize it's not the end of the world. I'm not especially happy about getting older, but it does make some things easier. It's a question of attitude. One thing I know for sure, though: if a thirty-year-old woman loves her body and is serious about keeping it looking the way it should, she has to put in a certain amount of effort. I learned that from my mother. She used to be a slim, lovely woman, but not anymore. I don't want the same thing to happen to me.

After I've had my swim, I use the rest of my afternoon in various ways. Sometimes I'll wander over to the station plaza and window-shop. Sometimes I'll go home, curl up on the sofa and read a book or listen to an FM station or just rest. Eventually my son comes home from school. I help him change into his playclothes, and give him a snack. When he's through eating, he goes out to play with his friends. He's too young to go to an afternoon cram school, and we aren't making him take piano lessons or anything. "Let him play," says my husband. "Let him grow up naturally." When my son leaves the house, I have the same little dialogue with him as I do with my husband. "Be careful," I say, and he answers, "Don't worry."

As evening approaches, I begin preparing dinner. My son is always back by six. He watches cartoons on



"Lights! Camera! Justice!"

• •

TV. If no emergency patients show up, my husband is home before seven. He doesn't drink a drop and he's not fond of pointless socializing. He almost always comes straight home from work.

The three of us talk during dinner, mostly about what we've done that day. My son always has the most to say. Everything that happens in his life is fresh and full of mystery. He talks, and we offer our comments. After dinner, he does what he likes—watches television or reads or plays some kind of game with my husband. When he has homework, he shuts himself up in his room and does it. He goes to bed at eight-thirty. I tuck him in and stroke his hair and say good night to him and turn off the light.

Then it's husband and wife together. He sits on the sofa, reading the newspaper and talking to me now and then about his patients or something in the paper. Then he listens to Haydn or Mozart. I don't mind listening to music, but I can never seem to tell the difference between those two composers. They sound the same to me. When I say that to my husband, he tells me it doesn't matter. "It's all beautiful. That's what counts."

"Just like you," I say.

"Just like me," he answers with a big smile. He seems genuinely pleased.

SO that's my life—or my life before I stopped sleeping—each day pretty much a repetition of the one before. I used to keep a simple diary, but if I forgot for two or three days, I'd lose track of what happened on which day. Yesterday could have been the day before yesterday, or vice versa. I'd sometimes wonder what kind of life this was. Which is not to say that I found it empty. I was—very simply—amazed. At the lack of demarcation between the days. At the fact that I was part of such a life, a life that had swallowed me up so completely. At the fact that my footprints were being blown away before I ever had a chance to turn and look at them.

Whenever I felt like that, I would look at my face in the bathroom mirror—just look at it for fifteen minutes at a time, my mind a total blank. I'd stare at my face purely as a physical object, and gradually it would disconnect from the rest of me, becoming just some thing that happened to exist at the same time as myself. And a realization would come to me: This is happening here and now. It's got nothing to do with footprints. Reality and I exist simultaneously at this present moment. That's the most important thing.

But now I can't sleep anymore. When I stopped sleeping, I stopped keeping a diary.

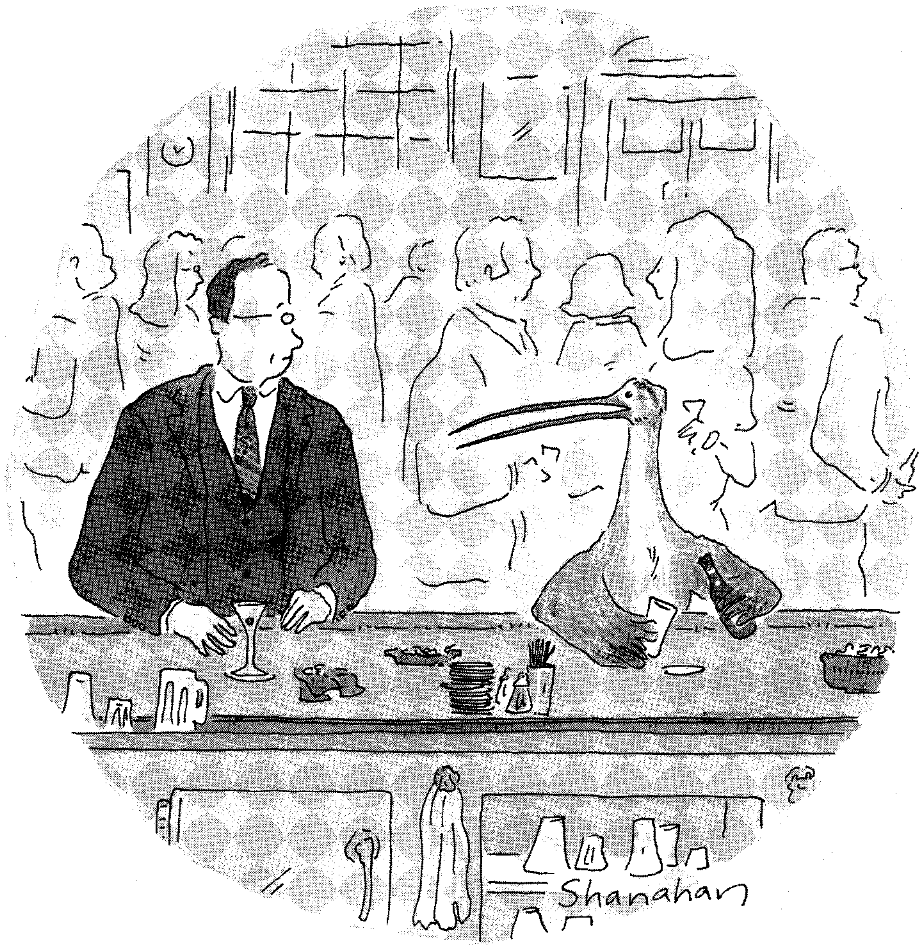
I REMEMBER with perfect clarity that first night I lost the ability to sleep. I was having a repulsive dream—a dark, slimy dream. I don't remember what it was about, but I do remember how it felt: ominous and terrifying. I woke at the climactic moment—came fully awake with a start, as if something had dragged me back at the last moment from a fatal turning point. Had I remained immersed in the dream for another second, I would have been lost forever. My breath came in painful gasps for a time after I awoke. My arms and legs felt paralyzed. I lay there immobilized, listening to my own labored breathing, as if I were stretched out full length on the floor of a huge cavern.

"It was a dream," I told myself, and I waited for my breathing to calm down. Lying stiff on my back, I felt my heart working violently, my lungs hurrying the blood to it with big, slow, bellowslike contractions. I began to wonder what time it could be. I wanted to look at the clock by my pillow, but I couldn't turn my head far enough. Just then I seemed to catch a glimpse of something at the foot of the bed, something like a vague, black shadow. I caught my breath. My heart, my lungs, everything inside me seemed to freeze in that instant. I strained to see the black shadow.

The moment I tried to focus on it, the shadow began to assume a definite shape, as if it had been waiting for me to notice it. Its outline became distinct, and began to be filled with substance, and then with details. It was a gaunt old man wearing a skintight black shirt. His hair was gray and short, his cheeks sunken. He stood at my feet, perfectly still. He said nothing, but his piercing eyes stared at me. They were huge eyes, and I could see the red network of veins in them. The old man's face wore no expression at all. It told me nothing. It was like an opening in the darkness.

This was no longer the dream, I knew. From that, I had already awakened. And not just by drifting awake but by having my eyes ripped open. No, this was no dream. This was reality. And in reality an old man I had never seen before was standing at the foot of my bed. I had to do something—turn on the light, wake my husband, scream. I tried to move. I fought to make my limbs work, but it did no good. I couldn't move a finger. When it became clear to me that I would never be able to move, I was filled with a hopeless terror, a primal fear such as I had never experienced before, like a chill that rises silently from the bottomless well of memory. I tried to scream, but I was incapable of producing a sound, or even moving my tongue. All I could do was look at the old man.

Now I saw that he was holding something—a tall, narrow, rounded thing that shone white. As I stared at this object, wondering what it could be, it began to take on a definite shape, just as the shadow had earlier. It was a pitcher, an old-fashioned porcelain pitcher. After some time, the man raised the pitcher and began pouring water from it onto my feet. I could not feel the water. I could see it and hear it splashing down on my feet, but I couldn't feel a thing.



"You want your olive?"

The old man went on and on pouring water over my feet. Strange—no matter how much he poured, the pitcher never ran dry. I began to worry that my feet would eventually rot and melt away. Yes, of course they would rot. What else could they do with so much water pouring over them? When it occurred to me that my feet were going to rot and melt away, I couldn't take it any longer.

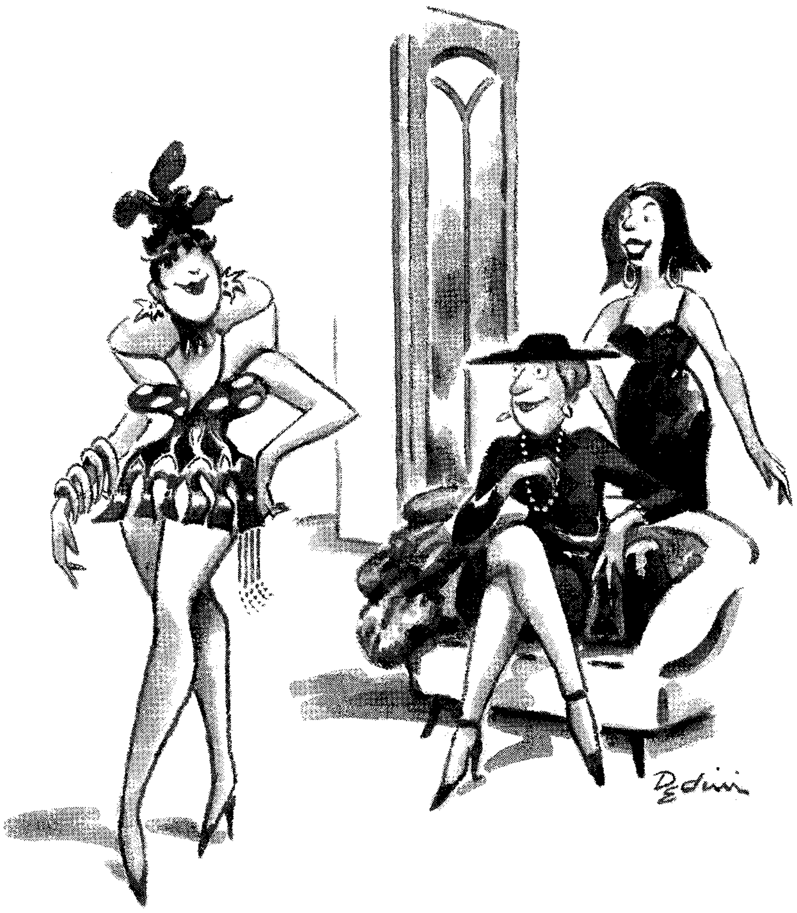
I closed my eyes and let out a scream so loud it took every ounce of strength I had. But it never left my body. It reverberated soundlessly inside, tearing through me, shutting down my heart. Everything inside my head turned white for a moment as the scream penetrated my every cell. Something inside me died. Something melted away, leaving only a shuddering vacuum. An explosive flash incinerated everything my existence depended on.

When I opened my eyes, the old man was gone. The pitcher was gone. The bedspread was dry, and there was no indication that anything near my feet had been wet. My body, though, was soaked with sweat, a horrifying volume of sweat, more sweat than I ever imagined a human being could produce. And yet, undeniably, it was sweat that had come from me.

I moved one finger. Then another, and another, and the rest. Next, I bent my arms and then my legs. I rotated my feet and bent my knees. Nothing moved quite as it should have, but at least it did move. After carefully checking to see that all my body parts were working, I eased myself into a sitting position. In the dim light filtering in from the street lamp, I scanned the entire room from corner to corner. The old man was definitely not there.

The clock by my pillow said twelve-thirty. I had been sleeping for only an hour and a half. My husband was sound asleep in his bed. Even his breathing was inaudible. He always sleeps like that, as if all mental activity in him had been obliterated. Almost nothing can wake him.

I got out of bed and went to the bathroom. I threw my sweat-soaked nightgown into the washing machine and took a shower. After putting on a fresh pair of pajamas, I went to the living room, switched on the floor lamp beside the sofa, and sat there



"Acrylic, hemp, fire wax on mirrored aluminum and stainless steel."

• •

drinking a full glass of brandy. I almost never drink. Not that I have a physical incompatibility with alcohol, as my husband does. In fact, I used to drink quite a lot, but after marrying him I simply stopped. Sometimes when I had trouble sleeping I would take a sip of brandy but that night I felt I wanted a whole glass to quiet my overwrought nerves.

The only alcohol in the house was a bottle of Remy Martin we kept in the sideboard. It had been a gift. I don't even remember who gave it to us, it was so long ago. The bottle wore a thin layer of dust. We had no real brandy glasses, so I just poured it into a regular tumbler and sipped it slowly.

I must have been in a trance, I thought. I had never experienced such a thing, but I had heard about trances from a college friend who had been through one. Everything was incredibly clear, she had said. You can't believe it's a dream. "I didn't believe it was a dream when it was happening, and now I still don't believe it was a dream." Which is exactly how I felt. Of course it had to be a dream—a kind of dream that doesn't feel like a dream.

Though the terror was leaving me, the trembling of my body would not stop. It was in my skin, like the circular ripples on water after an earthquake. I could see the slight quivering. The scream had done it. That scream that had never found a voice was still locked up in my body, making it tremble.

I closed my eyes and swallowed another mouthful of brandy. The warmth spread from my throat to my stomach. The sensation felt tremendously *real*.

With a start, I thought of my son. Again my heart began pounding. I hurried from the sofa to his room. He was sound asleep, one hand across his mouth, the other thrust out to the side, looking just as secure and peaceful in sleep as my husband. I straightened his blanket. Whatever it was that had so violently shattered my sleep, it had attacked only me. Neither of them had felt a thing.

I returned to the living room and wandered about there. I was not the least bit sleepy.

I considered drinking another glass of brandy. In fact, I wanted to drink even more alcohol than that. I wanted to warm my body more, to calm my nerves down more, and to feel that strong, penetrating bouquet in my mouth again. After some hesitation, I decided against it. I didn't want to start the new day drunk. I put the brandy back in the sideboard, brought the glass to the kitchen sink, and washed it. I found some strawberries in the refrigerator and ate them.

I realized that the trembling in my skin was almost gone.

What was that old man in black? I asked myself. I had never seen him before in my life. That black clothing of his was so strange, like a tight-fitting sweatsuit, and yet, at the same time, old-fashioned. I had never seen anything like it. And those eyes—bloodshot, and never blinking. Who was he? Why did he pour water on my feet? Why did he have to do such a thing?

I had only questions, no answers.

The time my friend went into a trance, she was spending the night at her fiancé's house. As she lay in bed asleep, an angry-looking man in his early fifties approached and ordered her out of the house. While that was happening, she couldn't move a muscle. And, like me, she became soaked with sweat. She was certain it must be the ghost of her fiancé's father, who was telling her to get out of his house. But when she asked to see a photograph of the father the next day, it turned out to be an entirely different man. "I must have been feeling tense," she concluded. "That's what caused it."

But *I'm* not tense. And this is my own house. There shouldn't be anything here to threaten me. Why did *I* have to go into a trance?

I shook my head. Stop thinking, I told myself. It won't do any good. I had a realistic dream, nothing more. I've probably been building up some kind of fatigue. The tennis I played the day before yesterday must have done it. I met a friend at the club after my swim and she invited me to play tennis and I overdid it a little, that's all. Sure—my arms and legs felt tired and heavy for a while afterward.

When I finished my strawberries, I

stretched out on the sofa and tried closing my eyes.

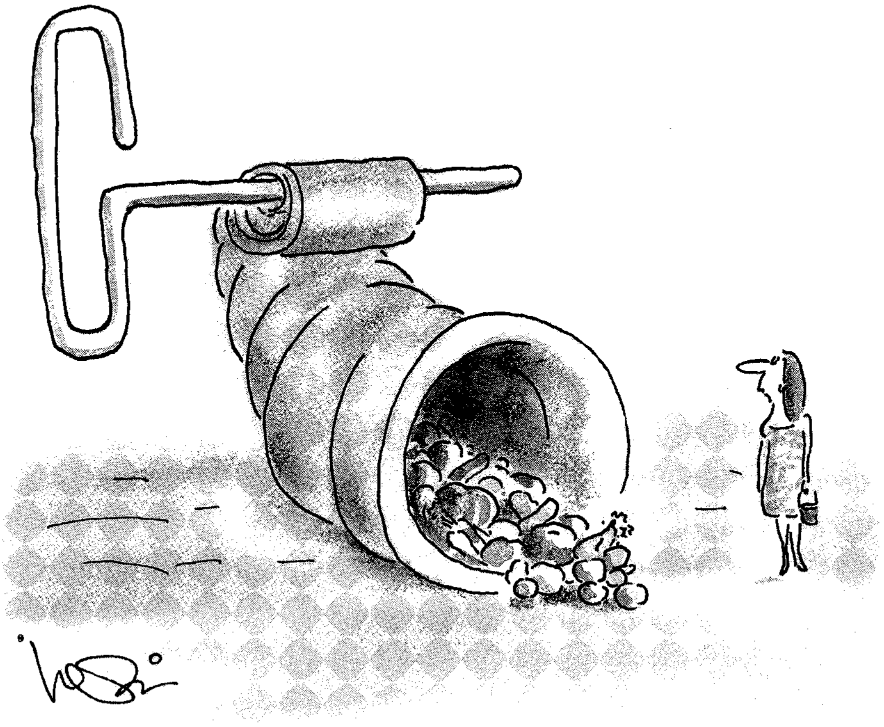
I wasn't sleepy at all. "Oh, great," I thought. "I really don't feel like sleeping."

I thought I'd read a book until I got tired again. I went to the bedroom and picked a novel from the bookcase. My husband didn't even twitch when I turned on the light to hunt for it. I chose "Anna Karenina." I was in the mood for a long Russian novel, and I had only read "Anna Karenina" once, long ago, probably in high school. I remembered just a few things about it: the first line, "All happy families resemble one another, every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way," and the heroine's throwing herself under a train at the end. And that early on there was a hint of the final suicide. Wasn't there a scene at a racetrack? Or was that in another novel?

Whatever. I went back to the sofa and opened the book. How many years had it been since I sat down and relaxed like this with a book? True, I often spent half an hour or an hour of my private time in the afternoon with a book open. But you couldn't really call that reading. I'd always find myself thinking about other things—my son, or shopping, or the freezer's needing to be fixed, or my having to find something to wear to a relative's wedding, or the stomach operation my father had last month. That kind of stuff would drift into my mind, and then it would grow, and take off in a million different directions. After a while I'd notice that the only thing that had gone by was the time, and I had hardly turned any pages.

Without noticing it, I had become accustomed in this way to a life without books. How strange, now that I think of it. Reading had been the center of my life when I was young. I had read every book in the grade-school library, and almost my entire allowance would go for books. I'd even scrimp on lunches to buy books I wanted to read. And this went on into junior high and high school. Nobody read as much as I did. I was the middle one of five children, and both my parents worked, so nobody paid much attention to me. I could read alone as much as I liked. I'd always enter the essay contests on books so I could win a gift certificate for more books. And I usually won. In college I majored in English literature and got good grades. My graduation thesis on Katherine Mansfield won top honors, and my thesis adviser urged me to apply to graduate school. I wanted to go out into the world, though, and I knew that I was no scholar. I just enjoyed reading books. And, even if I had wanted to go on studying, my family didn't have the financial wherewithal to send me to graduate school. We weren't poor by any means, but there were two sisters coming along after me, so once I graduated from college I simply had to begin supporting myself.

When had I really read a book last? And what had it been? I couldn't recall anything. Why did a person's life have to change so completely? Where had the old me gone, the one who used to read a book as if possessed by it? What had those days—and that almost abnormally intense passion—meant to me?



THAT night, I found myself capable of reading "Anna Karenina" with unbroken concentration. I went on turning pages without another thought in mind. In one sitting, I read as far as the scene where Anna and Vronsky first see each other in the Moscow train station. At that point, I stuck my bookmark in and poured myself another glass of brandy.

Though it hadn't occurred to me before, I couldn't help thinking what an odd novel this was. You don't see the heroine, Anna, until Chapter 18. I wondered if it didn't seem unusual to readers in Tolstoy's day. What did they do when the book went on and on with a detailed description of the life of a minor character named Oblonsky—just sit there, waiting for the beautiful heroine to appear? Maybe that was it. Maybe people in those days had lots of time to kill—at least the part of society that read novels.

Then I noticed how late it was. Three in the morning! And still I wasn't sleepy.

What should I do? I don't feel sleepy at all, I thought. I could just keep on reading. I'd love to find out what happens in the story. But I have to sleep.

I remembered my ordeal with insomnia and how I had gone through each day back then, wrapped in a cloud. No, never again. I was still a student in those days. It was still possible for me to get away with something like that. But not now, I thought. Now I'm a wife. A mother. I have responsibilities. I have to make my husband's lunches and take care of my son.

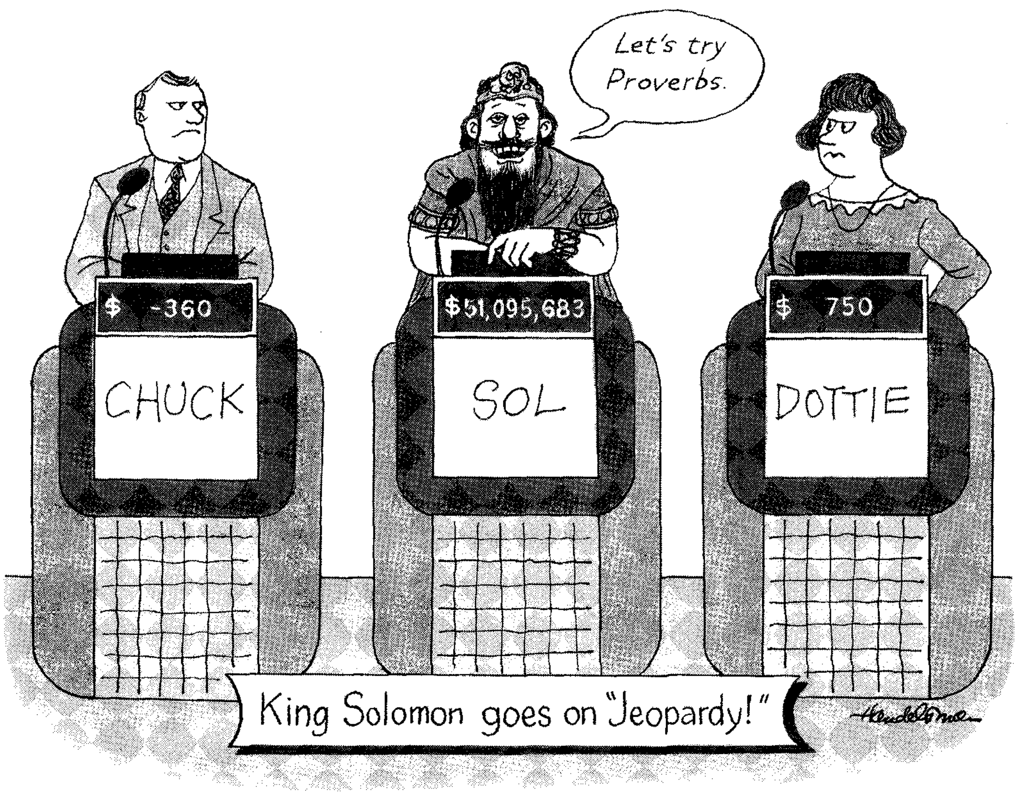
But even if I get into bed now, I know I won't be able to sleep a wink.

I shook my head.

Let's face it, I'm just not sleepy, I told myself. And I want to read the rest of the book.

I sighed and stole a glance at the big

volume lying on the table. And that was that. I plunged into "Anna Karenina" and kept reading until the sun came up. Anna and Vronsky stared at each other at the ball and fell into their doomed love. Anna went to pieces when Vronsky's horse fell at the racetrack (so there *was* a racetrack scene, after all!) and confessed her infidelity to her husband. I was there with Vronsky when he spurred his horse over the obstacles. I heard the crowd cheering him on. And I was there in the stands watching his horse go down. When the window brightened with the morning light, I laid the book down and went to the kitchen for a cup of coffee. My mind was filled with scenes from the novel and with a tremendous hunger, obliterating any other thoughts. I cut two slices of bread, spread them with butter and mustard, and had a cheese sandwich. My hunger pangs were almost unbearable. It was rare for me to feel that hungry. I had trouble breathing, I was so hungry. One sandwich did hardly anything for me, so I made another one and had another cup of coffee with it.



King Solomon goes on "Jeopardy!"

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TO my husband I said nothing about either my trance or my night without sleep. Not that I was hiding them from him. It just seemed to me that there was no point in telling him. What good would it have done? And besides, I had simply missed a night's sleep. That much happens to everyone now and then.

I made my husband his usual cup of coffee and gave my son a glass of warm milk. My husband ate toast and my son a bowl of cornflakes. My husband skimmed the morning paper and my son hummed a new song he had learned in school. The two of them got into the Sentra and left. "Be careful," I said to my husband. "Don't worry," he answered. The two of them waved. A typical morning.

After they were gone, I sat on the sofa and thought about how to spend the rest of the day. What should I do? What did I have to do? I went to the kitchen to inspect the contents of the refrigerator. I could get by without shopping. We had bread, milk, and eggs, and there was meat in the freezer. Plenty of vegetables, too. Everything I'd need through tomorrow's lunch.

I had business at the bank, but it was nothing I absolutely had to take care of immediately. Letting it go a day longer wouldn't hurt.

I went back to the sofa and started reading the rest of "Anna Karenina." Until that reading, I hadn't realized how little I remembered of what goes on in the book. I recognized virtually nothing—the characters, the scenes, nothing. I might as well have been reading a whole new book. How strange. I must have been deeply moved at the time I first read it, but now there was nothing left. Without my noticing, the memories of all the shuddering, soaring emotions had slipped away and vanished.

What, then, of the enormous fund of time I had consumed back then reading books? What had all that meant?

I stopped reading and thought about that for a while. None of it made sense to me, though, and soon I even lost track of what I was thinking about. I caught myself staring at the tree that stood outside the window. I shook my head and went back to the book.

Just after the middle of Volume III, I found a few crumbling flakes of chocolate stuck between the pages. I must have been eating chocolate as I read the novel when I was in high school. I used to like to eat and read. Come to think of it, I hadn't touched chocolate since my marriage. My husband doesn't like me to eat sweets, and we almost never give them to our son. We don't usually keep that kind of thing around the house.

As I looked at the whitened flakes of chocolate from over a decade ago, I felt a tremendous urge to have the real thing. I wanted to eat chocolate while reading "Anna Karenina," the way I did back then. I couldn't bear to be denied it for another moment. Every cell in my body seemed to be panting with this hunger for chocolate.

I slipped a cardigan over my shoulders and took the elevator down. I walked straight to the neighborhood candy shop and bought two of the sweetest-looking milk-chocolate bars they had. As soon as I left the shop, I tore one open, and started eating it while walking home. The luscious taste of milk chocolate spread through my mouth. I could feel the sweetness being absorbed directly into every part of my body. I continued eating in the elevator, steeping myself in the wonderful aroma that filled the tiny space.

Heading straight for the sofa, I started reading "Anna Karenina" and eating my chocolate. I wasn't the least bit sleepy. I felt no physical fatigue, either. I could have gone on reading forever. When I finished the first chocolate bar, I opened the second and ate half of that. About two-thirds of the way through Volume III, I looked at my watch. Eleven-forty.

Eleven-forty!

My husband would be home soon. I closed the book and hurried to the kitchen. I put water in a pot and turned on the gas. Then I minced some scallions and took out a handful of buckwheat noodles for boiling. While the water was heating, I soaked some dried seaweed, cut it up, and topped it with a vinegar dressing. I took a block of tofu from the refrigerator and cut it into cubes. Finally, I went to the bathroom and brushed my teeth to get rid of the chocolate smell.

At almost the exact moment the water came to a boil, my husband walked in. He had finished work a little earlier than usual, he said.

Together, we ate the buckwheat noodles. My husband talked about a new piece of dental equipment he was considering bringing into the office, a machine that would remove plaque from patients' teeth far more thoroughly than anything he had used before, and in less time. Like all such equipment, it was quite expensive, but it would pay for itself soon enough, since these days more and more patients were coming in just for a cleaning.

"What do you think?" he asked me.

I didn't want to think about plaque on people's teeth, and I especially didn't want to hear or think about it while I was eating. My mind was filled with hazy images of Vronsky falling off his horse. But of course I couldn't tell my husband that. He was deadly serious about the equipment. I asked him the price and pretended to think about it. "Why not buy it if you need it?" I said. "The money will work out one way or another. You wouldn't be spending it for fun, after all."

"That's true," he said. "I wouldn't be spending it for fun." Then he continued eating his noodles in silence.

Perched on a branch of the tree outside the window, a pair of large birds were chirping. I watched them half consciously. I wasn't sleepy. I wasn't the least bit sleepy. Why not?

While I cleared the table, my husband sat on the sofa reading the paper. "Anna Karenina" lay there beside him, but he didn't seem to notice. He had no interest in whether I read books.

After I finished washing the dishes, my husband said, "I've got a nice surprise today. What do you think it is?"

"I don't know," I said.

"My first afternoon patient has cancelled. I don't have to be back in the office until one-thirty." He smiled.

I couldn't figure out why this was supposed to be such a nice surprise. I wonder why I couldn't.

It was only after my husband stood up and drew me toward the bedroom that I realized what he had in mind. I wasn't in the mood for it at all. I didn't understand why I should have sex then. All I wanted was to get back to my book. I wanted to stretch out alone on the sofa and munch on chocolate while I turned the pages of "Anna Karenina." All the time I had been washing the dishes, my only thoughts had been of Vronsky and of how an author like Tolstoy managed to control his characters so skillfully. He described them with such wonderful precision. But that very precision somehow denied them a kind of salvation. And this finally—

I closed my eyes and pressed my fingertips to my temple.

"I'm sorry, I've had a kind of headache all day. What awful timing."

I had often had some truly terrible headaches, so he accepted my explanation without a murmur.

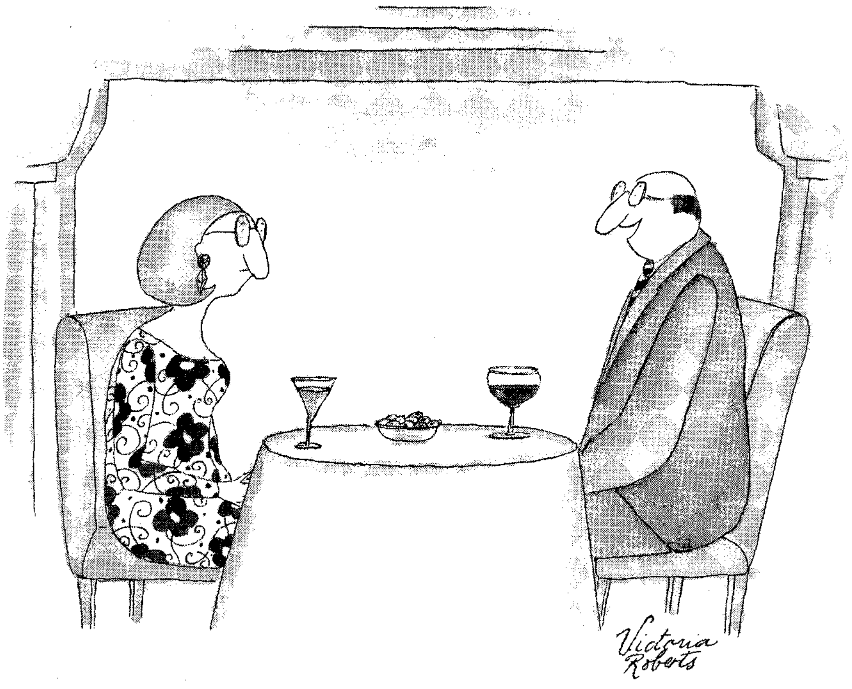
"You'd better lie down and get some rest," he said. "You've been working too hard."

"It's really not that bad," I said.

He relaxed on the sofa until one o'clock, listening to music and reading the paper. And he talked about dental equipment again. You bought the latest high-tech stuff and it was obsolete in two or three years. . . . So then you had to keep replacing everything . . . The only ones who made any money were the equipment manufacturers—that kind of talk. I offered a few clucks, but I was hardly listening.

After my husband went back to the office, I folded the paper and pounded the sofa cushions until they were puffed up again. Then I leaned on the windowsill, surveying the room. I couldn't figure out what was happening. Why wasn't I sleepy? In the old days I had done all-nighters any number of times, but I had never stayed awake this long. Ordinarily, I would have been sound asleep after so many hours, or, if not asleep, impossibly tired. But I wasn't the least bit sleepy. My mind was perfectly clear.

I went into the kitchen and warmed up some coffee. I thought, Now what should I do? Of course I wanted to read the rest of "Anna Karenina," but I also wanted to go to the pool for my swim. After a good deal of agonizing, I decided to go swimming. I don't know how to explain this, but I wanted to purge my body of something by exercising it to the limit. Purge it—of what? I spent some time



"I love you the way the French love Jerry Lewis."

wondering about that. Purge it of what?

I didn't know.

But this thing, whatever it was, this mistlike something, hung there inside my body like a certain kind of potential. I wanted to give it a name, but the word refused to come to mind. I'm terrible at finding the right words for things. I'm sure Tolstoy would have been able to come up with exactly the right word.

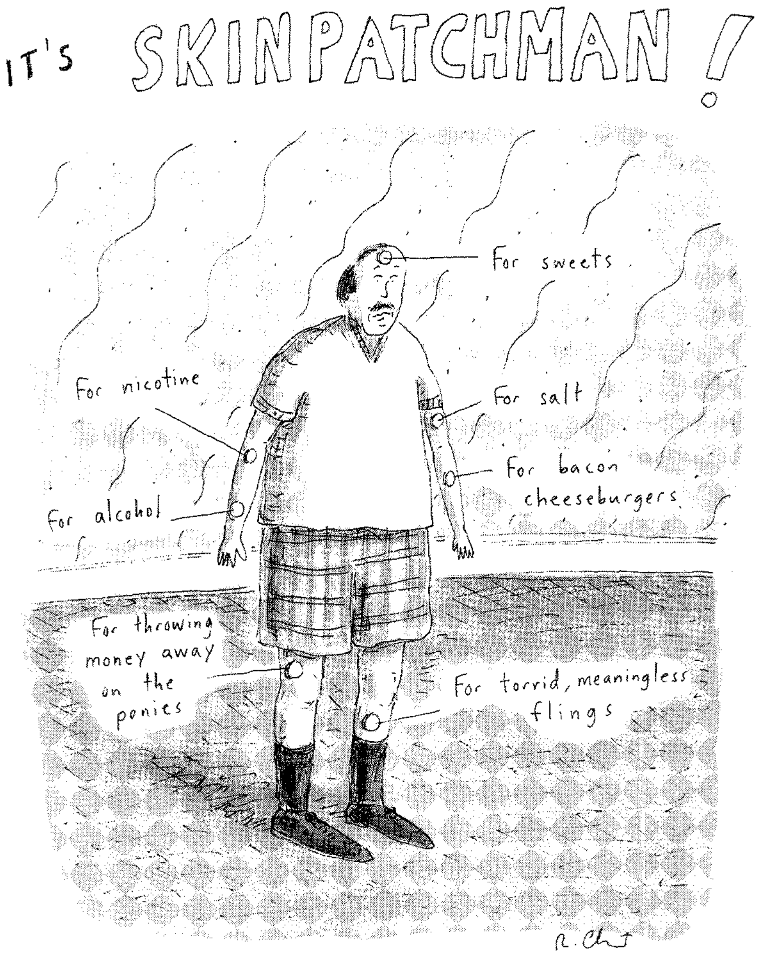
Anyhow, I put my swimsuit in my bag and, as always, drove my Civic to the athletic club. There were only two other people in the pool—a young man and a middle-aged woman—and I didn't know either of them. A bored-looking lifeguard was on duty.

I changed into my bathing suit, put on my goggles, and swam my usual thirty minutes. But thirty minutes wasn't enough. I swam another fifteen minutes, ending with a crawl for two full lengths at maximum speed. I was out of breath, but I still felt nothing but energy welling up inside my body. The others were staring at me when I left the pool.

It was still a little before three o'clock, so I drove to the bank and finished my business there. I considered doing some shopping at the supermarket, but I decided instead to head straight for home. There, I picked up "Anna Karenina" where I had left off, eating what was left of the chocolate. When my son came home at four o'clock, I gave him a glass of juice, and some fruit gelatin that I had made. Then I started on dinner. I defrosted some meat from the freezer and cut up some vegetables in preparation for stir-frying. I made miso soup and cooked the rice. All of these tasks I took care of with tremendous mechanical efficiency.

I went back to "Anna Karenina."

I was not tired.



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AT ten o'clock I got into my bed, pretending that I would be sleeping there near my husband. He fell asleep right away, practically the moment the light went out, as if there were some cord connecting the lamp with his brain.

Amazing. People like that are rare. There are far more people who have trouble falling asleep. My father was one of those. He'd always complain about how shallow his sleep was. Not only did he find it hard to get to sleep, but the slightest sound or movement would wake him up for the rest of the night.

Not my husband, though. Once he was asleep nothing could wake him until morning. We were still newlyweds when it struck me how odd this was. I even experimented to see what it would take to wake him. I sprinkled water on his face and tickled his nose with a brush and that kind of thing. I never once got him to wake up. If I kept at it, I could get him to groan once, but that was all. And he never dreamed. At least he never remembered what his dreams were about. Needless to say, he never went into any paralytic trances. He slept. He slept like a turtle buried in mud.

Amazing. But it helped with what quickly became my nightly routine.

After ten minutes of lying near him, I would get out of bed. I would go to the living room, turn on the floor lamp, and pour myself a glass of brandy. Then I would sit on the sofa and read my book, taking tiny sips of brandy and letting the smooth liquid glide over my tongue. Whenever I felt like it, I would eat a cookie or a piece of chocolate that I had hidden in the sideboard. After a while, morning would come. When that happened, I would close my book and make myself a cup of coffee. Then I would make a sandwich and eat it.

My days became just as regulated.

I would hurry through my housework and spend the rest of the morning reading. Just before noon, I would put my book down and fix my husband's lunch. When he left, before one, I'd drive to the club and have my swim. I would swim for a full hour. Once I stopped sleeping, thirty minutes was never enough. While I was in the water I concentrated my entire mind on swimming. I thought about nothing but how to move my body most effectively, and I inhaled and exhaled with perfect regularity. If I met someone I knew, I hardly said a word—just the basic civilities. I refused all invitations. "Sorry," I'd say. "I'm going straight home today. There's something I have to do." I didn't want to get involved with anybody. I didn't want to have to waste time on endless

WITHERED COMPLIMENTS

Have a care lest
the jewelled words of others
force you to act, you, too: "Delicious.
I love you. Goodbye." For in that autumn
after speech strange desires stir.
It is not enough
to have kept one's hands to oneself,

not enough to see them cheating
and take no action. It is not enough,
finally, to turn
and walk back to the house
where disappointed parents wait, not
enough to smile through abuse and gather them
into the big, hectic embrace.

These days there are other worries to assess.
How did that band of shrubbery grow so sharp
that the rest of the landscape is dim,
pleading ignorance? And the arborist has other
things on his mind, as does the land surveyor.
If you, too, could see that far out to sea
your forces might crumble. They, though,
take it in stride, but that, too, might be a warning:
earth, air, tire, water,

let all stand, be around
as much as we wrap around them
at day's outer limits.
A kind of slow afternoon here, too.
The aftershock holds no surprises.

—John Ashbery

• •

gossiping. When I was through swimming as hard as I could, all I wanted was to hurry home and read.

I went through the motions—shopping, cooking, playing with my son, having sex with my husband. It was easy once I got the hang of it. All I had to do was break the connection between my mind and my body. While my body went about its business, my mind floated in its own inner space. I ran the house without a thought in my head, feeding snacks to my son, chatting with my husband.

After I gave up sleeping, it occurred to me what a simple thing reality is, how easy it is to make it work. It's just reality. Just housework. Just a home. Like running a simple machine. Once you learn to run it, it's just a matter of repetition. You push this button and pull that lever. You adjust a gauge, put on the lid, set the timer. The same thing, over and over.

Of course there were variations now and then. My mother-in-law had dinner with us. On Sunday, the three of us went to the zoo. My son had a terrible case of diarrhea.

But none of these events had any effect on my being. They swept past me like a silent breeze. I chatted with my mother-in-law, made dinner for four, took a picture in front of the bear cage, put a hot-water bottle on my son's stomach, and gave him his medicine.

No one noticed that I had changed—that I had given up sleeping entirely, that I was spending all my time reading, that my mind was someplace a hundred years—and hundreds of miles—from reality. No matter how mechanically I worked, no matter how little love or emotion I invested in my handling of reality, my husband and my son and my mother-in-law went on relating to me as they always had. If anything, they seemed more at ease with me than before.

And so a week went by.

Once my constant wakefulness entered its second week, though, it started to worry me. It was simply not normal. People are supposed to sleep. All people sleep. Once, some years ago, I had read about a form of torture in which the victim is prevented from sleeping. Something the Nazis did, I think. They'd lock the person in a tiny room, fasten his eyelids open, and keep shining lights in his face and making loud noises without a break. Eventually, the person would go mad and die.

I couldn't recall how long the article said it took for the madness to set in, but it couldn't have been much more than three days or four. In my case, a whole week had gone by. This was simply too much. Still, my health was not suffering. Far from it. I had more energy than ever.

One day, after showering, I stood naked in front of the mirror. I was amazed to discover that my body appeared to be almost bursting with vitality. I studied every inch of myself, head to toe, but I could find not the slightest hint of excess flesh, not one wrinkle. I no longer had the body of a young girl, of course, but my skin had far more glow, far more tautness than it had before. I took a pinch of flesh near my waist, and found it almost hard, with a wonderful elasticity.

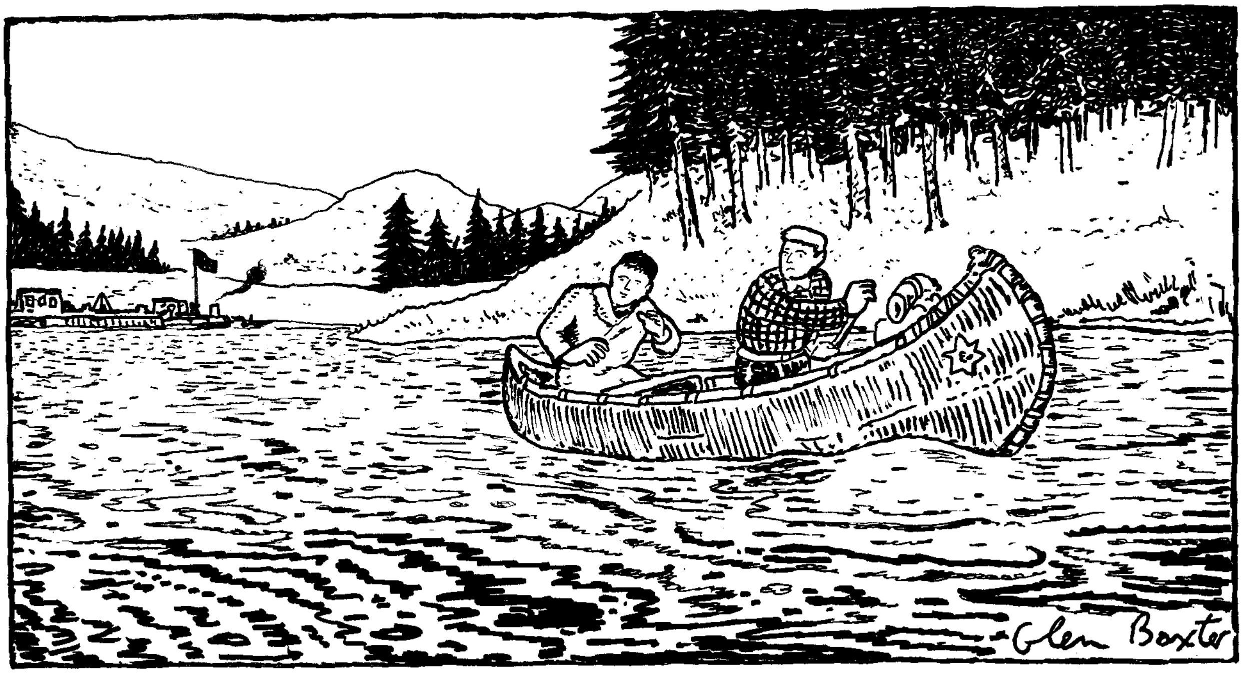
It dawned on me that I was prettier than I had realized. I looked so much younger than before that it was almost shocking. I could probably pass for twenty-four. My skin was smooth. My eyes were bright, lips moist. The shadowed area beneath my protruding cheekbones (the one feature I really hated about myself) was no longer noticeable—at all. I sat down and looked at my face in the mirror for a good thirty minutes. I studied it from all angles, objectively. No, I had not been mistaken: I was really pretty.

What was happening to me?

I thought about seeing a doctor.

I had a doctor who had been taking

Judith Shahn



SOME THREE DAYS OUT FROM BASE CAMP I DISCOVERED WHY WE WERE MAKING SUCH SLOW PROGRESS.

• •

care of me since I was a child and to whom I felt close, but the more I thought about how he might react to my story the less inclined I felt to tell it to him. Would he take me at my word? He'd probably think I was crazy if I said I hadn't slept in a week. Or he might dismiss it as a kind of neurotic insomnia. But if he did believe I was telling the truth he might send me to some big research hospital for testing.

And *then* what would happen?

I'd be locked up and sent from one lab to another to be experimented on. They'd do EEGs and EKGs and urinalyses and blood tests and psychological screening and who knows what else.

I couldn't take that. I just wanted to stay by myself and quietly read my book. I wanted to have my hour of swimming every day. I wanted my freedom: that's what I wanted more than anything. I didn't want to go to any hospitals. And, even if they *did* get me into a hospital, what would they find? They'd do a mountain of tests and formulate a mountain of hypotheses, and that would be the end of it. I didn't want to be locked up in a place like that.

One afternoon I went to the library and read some books on sleep. The few books I could find didn't tell me much. In fact, they all had only one thing to say: that sleep is rest. Like turning off a car engine. If you keep a motor running constantly, sooner or later it will break down. A running engine must produce heat, and the accumulated heat fatigues the machinery itself. Which is why you have to let the engine rest. Cool down. Turning off the engine—that, finally, is what sleep is. In a human being, sleep provides rest for both the flesh and the spirit. When a person lies down and rests her muscles, she simultaneously closes her eyes and cuts off the thought processes. And excess thoughts release an electrical discharge in the form of dreams.

One book did have a fascinating point to make. The author maintained that human beings, by their very nature, are incapable of escaping from certain fixed idiosyncratic drives both in their thought processes and in their physical movements. People unconsciously fashion their own action- and thought-drives, which under normal circumstances never disappear. In other words, people live in the prison cells of their own drives. What modulates these drives and keeps them in check—so the organism doesn't wear down as the heel of a shoe does, at a particular angle, as the author puts it—is nothing other than sleep. Sleep therapeutically counteracts the tendency. In sleep, people naturally relax muscles that have been consistently used in only one direction; sleep both calms and provides a discharge for thought circuits that have likewise been used in only one direction. This is how people are cooled down. Sleeping is an act that has been programmed, with Karmic inevitability, into the human system, and no one can diverge from it. If a person *were* to diverge from it, the person's very "ground of being" would be threatened.

"Drives?" I asked myself.

The only "drive" of mine that I could think of was housework—those chores I perform day after day like an unfeeling machine. Cooking and shopping and laundry and mothering: what were they if not "drives"? I could do them with my eyes closed. Push the buttons. Pull the levers. Pretty soon, reality just flows off and away. The same physical movements over and over. Drives. They were consuming me, wearing me down on one side like the heel of a shoe. I needed sleep every day to adjust them and cool me down.

Was that it?

I read the passage once more, with intense concentration. And I nodded. Yes, almost certainly, that *was* it.

So, then, what was this life of mine? I was being consumed by my drives and then sleeping to repair the damage. My life was nothing but a repetition of this cycle. It was going nowhere.

Sitting at the library table, I shook my head.

I'm through with sleep! So what if I go mad? So what if I lose my "ground of being"? I will not be consumed by my "drives." If sleep is nothing more than a periodic repairing of the parts of me that are being worn away, I don't want it anymore. I don't need it anymore. My flesh may have to be consumed, but my mind belongs to me. I'm keeping it for myself. I will not hand it over to anyone. I don't want to be "repaired." I will not sleep.

I left the library filled with a new determination.

NOW my inability to sleep ceased to frighten me. What was there to be afraid of? Think of the advantages! Now the hours from ten at night to six in the morning belonged to me alone. Until now, a third of every day had been used up by sleep. But no more. No more. Now it was mine, just mine, nobody else's, all mine. I could use this time in any way I liked. No one would get in my way. No one would make demands on me. Yes, that was it. I had expanded my life. I had increased it by a third.

You are probably going to tell me that this is biologically abnormal. And you may be right. And maybe someday in the future I'll have to pay back the debt I'm building up by continuing to do this biologically abnormal thing. Maybe life will try to collect on the expanded part—this "advance" it is paying me now. This is a groundless hypothesis, but there is no ground for negating it, and it feels right to me somehow. Which means that in the end the balance sheet of borrowed time will even out.

Honestly, though, I didn't give a damn, even if I had to die young. The best thing to do with a hypothesis is to let it run any course it pleases. Now, at least, I was expanding my life, and it was wonderful. My hands weren't empty anymore. Here I was—alive, and I could feel it. It was real. I wasn't being consumed any longer. Or at least there was a part of me in existence that was not being consumed, and that was what gave me this intensely real feeling of being alive. A life without that feeling might go on forever, but it would have no meaning at all. I saw that with absolute clarity now.

After checking to see that my husband was asleep I would go sit on the living-room sofa, drink brandy by myself, and open my book. I read "Anna Karenina" three times. Each time, I made new discoveries. This enormous novel was full of revelations and riddles. Like a Chinese box, the world of the novel contained smaller worlds, and inside those were yet smaller worlds. Together, these worlds made up a single universe, and the universe waited there in the book to be discovered by the reader. The old me had been able to understand only the tiniest fragment of it, but the gaze of this new me could penetrate to the core with perfect understanding. I knew exactly what the great Tolstoy wanted to say, what he wanted the reader to get from his book; I could see how his message had organically crystallized as a novel, and what in that novel had surpassed the author himself.

No matter how hard I concentrated, I never tired. After reading "Anna Karenina" as many times as I could, I read Dostoyevski. I could read book after book with utter concentration and never tire. I could understand the most difficult passages without effort. And I responded with deep emotion.

I felt that I had always been meant to be like this. By abandoning sleep I had expanded myself. The power to concentrate was the most important thing. Living without this power would be like opening one's eyes without seeing anything.

Eventually, my bottle of brandy ran out. I had drunk almost all of it by myself. I went to the gourmet department of a big store for another bottle of Remy Martin. As long as I was there, I figured, I might as well buy a bottle of red wine, too. And a fine crystal brandy glass. And chocolate and cookies.

Sometimes while reading I would become overexcited. When that happened, I would put my book down and exercise—do calisthenics or just walk around the room. Depending on my mood, I might go out for a nighttime drive. I'd change clothes, get into my Civic, and drive aimlessly around the neighborhood. Sometimes I'd drop into an all-night fast-food place for a cup of coffee, but it was such a bother to have to deal with other people that I'd usually stay in the car. I'd stop in some safe-looking spot and just let my mind wander. Or I'd go all the way to the harbor and watch the boats.

One time, though, I was questioned by a policeman. It was two-thirty in the morning, and I was parked under a street lamp near the pier, listening to the car stereo and watching the lights of the ships passing by. He knocked on my window. I lowered the glass. He was young and handsome, and very polite. I explained to him that I couldn't sleep. He asked for my license and studied it for a while. "There was a murder here last month," he said. "Three young men attacked a couple, killed the man, and raped the woman." I remembered having read about the incident. I nodded. "If you don't have any business here, Ma'am, you'd better not hang around here at night." I thanked him and said I would leave. He gave my license back. I drove away.

That was the only time anyone talked to me. Usually I would drift through the streets at night for an hour or more and no one would bother me. Then I would park in our underground garage. Right next to my husband's white Sentra; he was upstairs sleeping soundly in the darkness. I'd listen to the crackle of the hot engine cooling down, and when the sound died I'd go upstairs.

The first thing I would do when I got inside was check to make sure my husband was asleep. And he always was. Then I'd check my son, who was always sound asleep, too. They didn't know a thing. They believed that the world was as it always had been, unchanging. But they were wrong. It was changing in ways they could never guess. Changing a lot. Changing fast. It would never be the same again.

One time I stood and stared at my sleeping husband's face. I had heard a thump in the bedroom and rushed in. The alarm clock was on the floor. He had probably knocked it down in his sleep. But he was sleeping as soundly as ever, completely unaware of what he had done. What would it take to wake this man? I picked up the clock and put it back on the night table. Then I folded my arms and stared at *celebrate*

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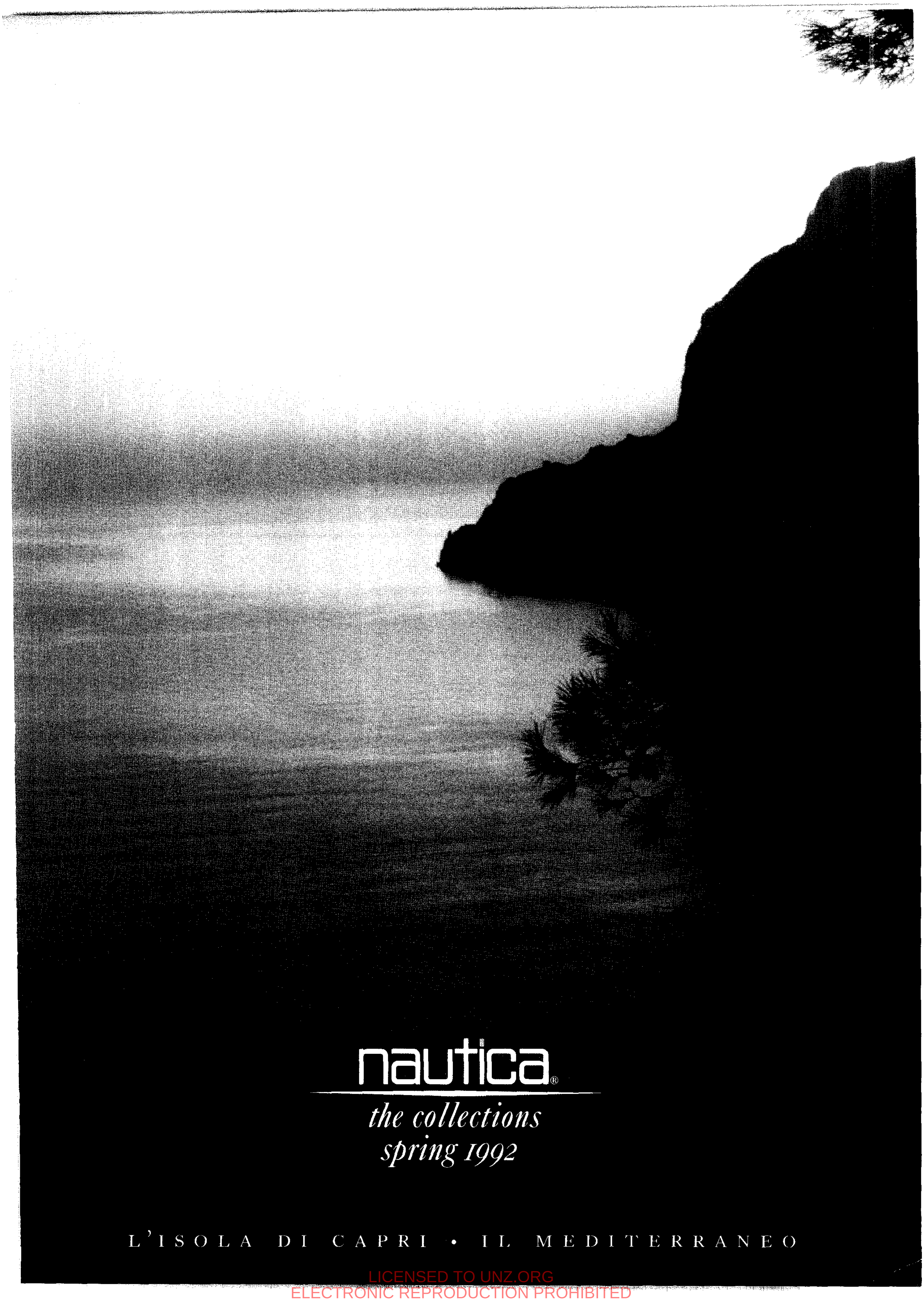
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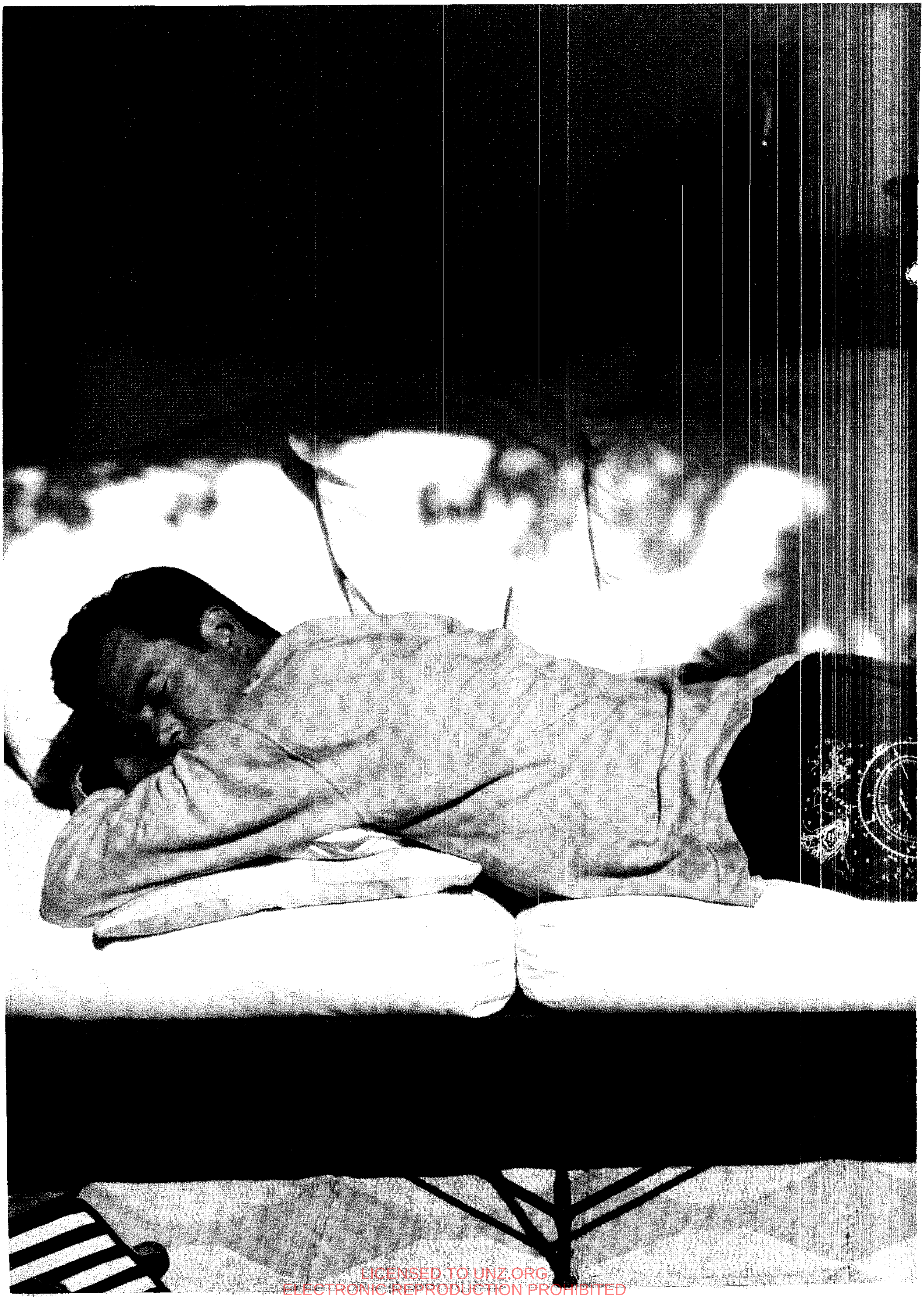

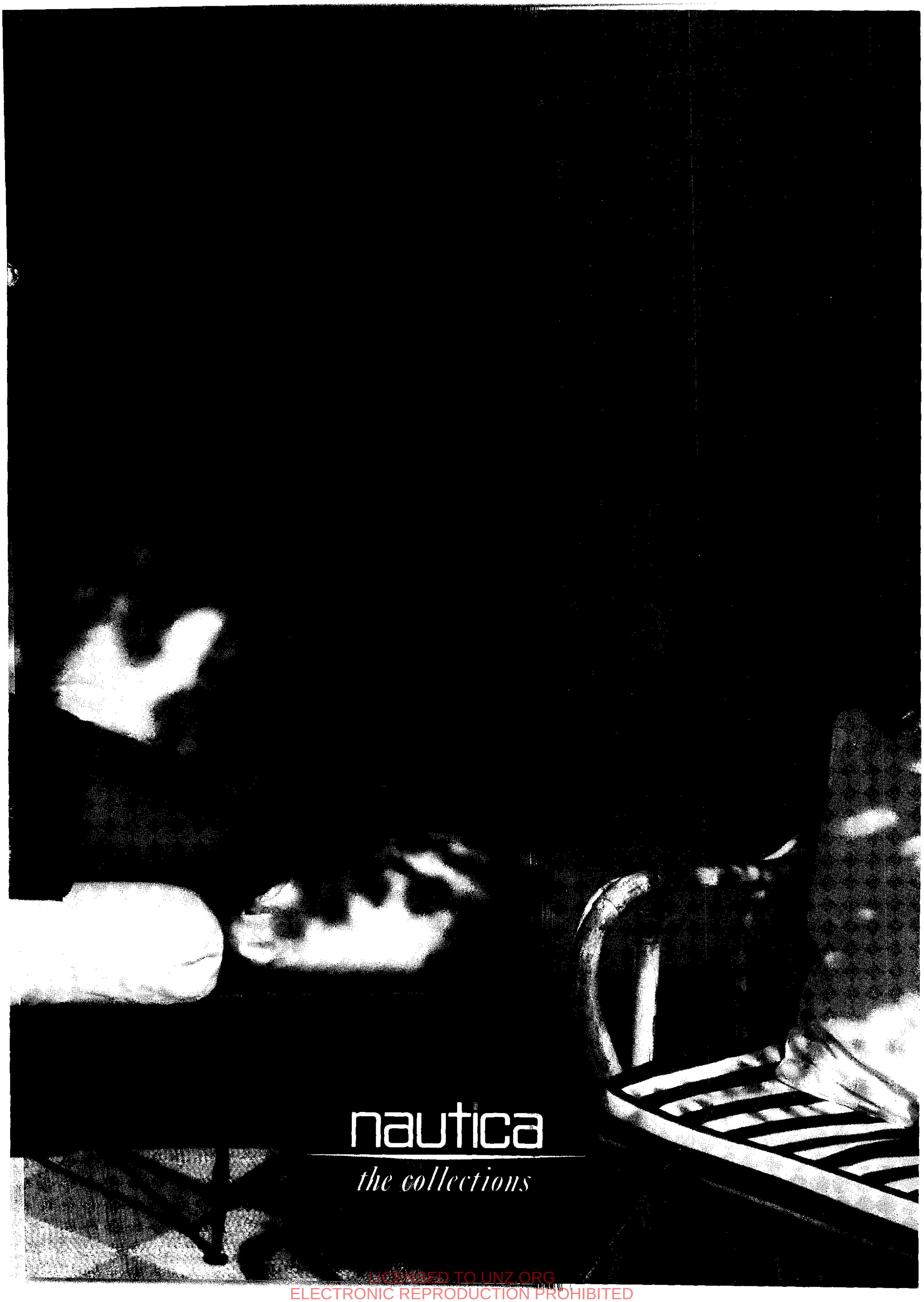
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my husband. How long had it been—years?—since the last time I had studied his face as he slept?

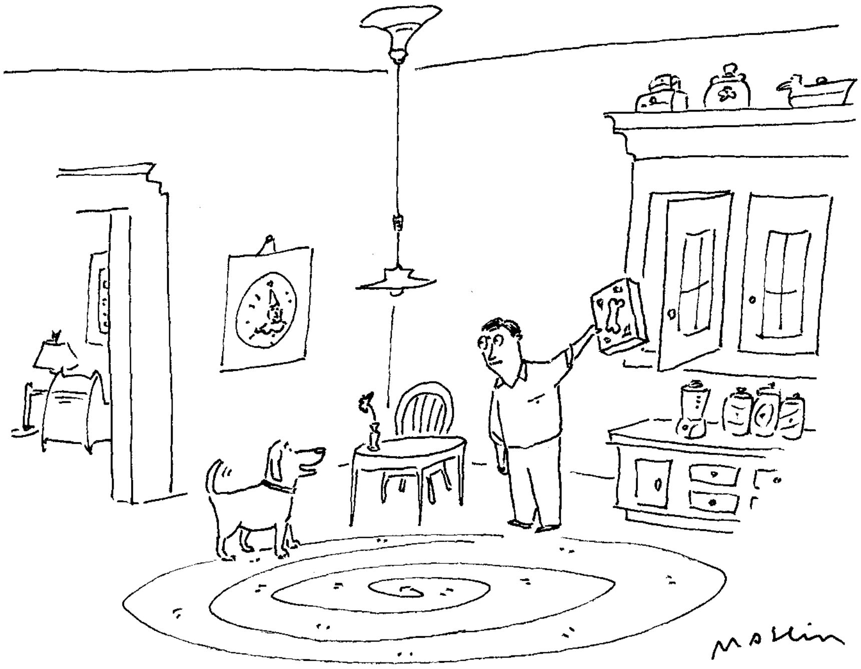
I had done it a lot when we were first married. That was all it took to relax me and put me in a peaceful mood. "I'll be safe as long as he goes on sleeping peacefully like this," I'd tell myself. Which is why I spent a lot of time watching him in his sleep.

But, somewhere along the way, I had given up the habit. When had that been? I tried to remember. It had probably happened back when my mother-in-law and I were sort of quarrelling over what name to give my son. She was big on some religious-cult kind of thing, and had asked her priest to "bestow" a name on the baby. I don't remember exactly the name she was given, but I had no intention of letting some priest "bestow" a name on my child. We had some pretty violent arguments at the time, but my husband couldn't say a thing to either of us. He stood by and tried to calm us.

After that I lost the feeling that my husband was my protector. The one thing I thought I wanted from him he had failed to give me. All he had managed to do was make me furious. This all happened a long time ago, of course. My mother-in-law and I have long since made up. I gave my son the name I wanted to give him. My husband and I made up right away, too.

I'm pretty sure that was the end, though, of my watching him in his sleep.

So there I stood, looking at him sleeping as soundly as always. One bare foot stuck out from under the covers at a strange angle—so strange that the foot could have belonged to someone else. It was a big, chunky foot. My husband's mouth hung open, the lower lip drooping. Every once in a while, his nostrils would twitch. There was a mole under his eye that bothered me. It was so big and vulgar-looking. There was something vulgar about the way his eyes were closed, the lids slack, covers made of faded human flesh. He looked like an absolute fool. This was what they mean by "dead to the world." How incredibly ugly! He sleeps with such an ugly face! It's just too gruesome, I thought. He couldn't have been like this in the old days. I'm sure he must have had a better face when we were first married, one that was taut and alert. Even sound asleep, he couldn't have been such a blob.



"Just seeing you happy is my reward—I'm not in it for the biscuits."

I tried to remember what his sleeping face had looked like back then, but I couldn't do it, though I tried hard enough. All I could be sure of was that he *couldn't* have had such a terrible face. Or was I just deceiving myself? Maybe he had always looked like this in his sleep and I had been indulging in some kind of emotional projection. I'm sure that's what my mother would say. That sort of thinking was a specialty of hers. "All that lovey-dovey stuff lasts two years—three years tops," she always used to insist. "You were a new bride," I'm sure she would tell me now. "Of *course* your little hubby looked like a darling in his sleep."

I'm sure she would say something like that, but I'm just as sure that she'd be wrong. He *had* grown ugly over the years. The firmness had gone out of his face. That's what growing old is all about. He was old now, and tired. Worn out. He'd get even uglier in the years ahead, that much was certain. And I had no choice but to go along with it, put up with it, resign myself to it.

I let out a sigh as I stood there watching him. It was a deep sigh, a noisy one as sighs go, but of course he didn't move a muscle. The loudest sigh in the world would never wake him up.

I left the bedroom and went back to the living room. I poured myself a brandy and started reading. But something wouldn't let me concentrate. I put the book down and went to my son's room. Opening the door, I stared at his face in the light spilling in from the hallway. He was sleeping just as soundly as my husband was. As he always did. I watched him in his sleep, looked at his smooth, nearly featureless face. It was very different from my husband's: it was still a child's face, after all. The skin still glowed; it still had nothing vulgar about it.

And yet something about my son's face annoyed me. I had never felt anything like this about him before. What could be making me feel this way? I stood there, looking, with my arms folded. Yes, of course I loved my son, loved him tremendously. But still, undeniably, that something was bothering me, getting on my nerves.

I shook my head.

I closed my eyes and kept them shut. Then I opened them and looked at my son's face again. And then it hit me. What bothered me about my son's sleeping face was that it looked exactly like my husband's. And exactly like my mother-in-law's. Stubborn. Self-satisfied. It was in their blood—a kind of arrogance I hated in my husband's family. True, my husband is good to me. He's sweet and gentle and he's careful to take my feelings into account. He's never fooled around with other women, and he works hard. He's serious, and he's kind to everybody. My friends all tell me how lucky I am to have him. And I can't fault him, either. Which is exactly what galls me sometimes. His very absence of faults makes for a strange rigidity that excludes imagination. That's what grates on me so.

And that was exactly the kind of expression my son had on his face as he slept.

I shook my head again. This little boy is a stranger to me, finally. Even after he grows up, he'll never be able to understand me, just as my husband can hardly understand what I feel now.

I love my son, no question. But I sensed that someday I would no longer be able to love this boy with the same intensity. Not a very maternal thought. Most mothers never have thoughts like that. But as I stood there looking at him asleep, I knew with absolute certainty that one day I would come to despise him.

The thought made me terribly sad. I closed his door and turned out the hall light. I went to the living-room sofa, sat down, and opened my book. After reading a few pages, I closed it again. I looked at the clock. A little before three.

I wondered how many days it had been since I stopped sleeping. The sleeplessness started the Tuesday before last. Which made this the seventeenth day. Not one wink of sleep in seventeen days. Seventeen days and seventeen nights. A long, long time. I couldn't even recall what sleep was like.

I closed my eyes and tried to recall the sensation of sleeping, but all that existed for me inside was a wakeful darkness. A wakeful darkness: what it called to mind was death.

Was I about to die?

And if I died now, what would my life have amounted to?

There was no way I could answer that.

All right, then, what *was* death?

Until now I had conceived of sleep as a kind of model for death. I had imagined death as an extension of sleep. A far deeper sleep than ordinary sleep. A sleep devoid of all consciousness. Eternal rest. A total blackout.

But now I wondered if I had been wrong. Perhaps death was a state entirely unlike sleep, something that belonged to a different category altogether—like the deep, endless, wakeful darkness I was seeing now.

No, that would be too terrible. If the state of death was not to be a rest for us, then what was going to redeem this imperfect life of ours, so fraught with exhaustion? Finally, though, no one knows what death is. Who has ever truly seen it? No one. Except the ones who are dead. No one living knows what death is like. They can only guess. And the best guess is still a guess. Maybe death *is* a kind of rest, but reasoning can't tell us that. The only way to find out what death is is to die. *Death can be anything at all.*

An intense terror overwhelmed me at the thought. A stiffening chill ran down my spine. My eyes were still shut tight. I had lost the power to open them. I stared at the thick darkness that stood planted in front of me, a darkness as deep and hopeless as the universe itself. I was all alone. My mind was in deep concentration, and expanding. If I had wanted to, I could have seen into the uttermost depths of the universe. But I decided not to look. It was too soon for that.

If death was like this, if to die meant being eternally awake and staring into the darkness like this, what should I do?

At last, I managed to open my eyes. I gulped down the brandy that was left in my glass.

I'M taking off my pajamas and putting on jeans, a T-shirt, and a windbreaker. I tie my hair back in a tight ponytail, tuck it under the windbreaker, and put on a baseball cap of my husband's. In the mirror I look like a boy. Good. I put on sneakers and go down to the garage.

I slip in behind the steering wheel, turn the key, and listen to the engine hum. It sounds normal. Hands on the wheel, I take a few deep breaths. Then I shift into gear and drive out of the building. The car is running better than usual. It seems to be gliding across a sheet of ice. I ease it into higher gear, move out of the neighborhood, and enter the highway to Yokohama.

It's only three in the morning, but the number of cars on the road is by no means small. Huge semis roll past, shaking the ground as they head east. Those guys don't sleep at night. They sleep in the daytime and work at night for greater efficiency.

What a waste. I could work day *and* night. I don't have to sleep.

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This is biologically unnatural, I suppose, but who really knows what is natural? They just infer it inductively. I'm beyond that. *A priori.* An evolutionary leap. A woman who never sleeps. An expansion of consciousness.

I have to smile. *A priori.* An evolutionary leap.

Listening to the car radio, I drive to the harbor. I want classical music, but I can't find a station that broadcasts it at night. Stupid Japanese rock music. Love songs sweet enough to rot your teeth. I give up searching and listen to those. They make me feel I'm in a far-off place, far away from Mozart and Haydn.

I pull into one of the white-outlined spaces in the big parking lot at the waterfront park and cut my engine. This is the brightest area of the lot, under a lamp, and wide open all around. Only one other car is parked here—an old, white two-door coupé of the kind that young people like to drive. Probably a couple in there now, making love—no money for a hotel room. To avoid trouble, I pull my hat low, trying not to look like a woman. I check to see that my doors are locked.

Half consciously, I let my eyes wander through the surrounding darkness, when all of a sudden I remember a drive I took with my boyfriend the year I was a college freshman. We parked and got into some heavy petting. He couldn't stop, he said, and he begged me to let him put it in. But I refused. Hands on the steering wheel, listening to the music, I try to bring back the scene, but I can't recall his face. It all seems to have happened such an incredibly long time ago.

All the memories I have from the time before I stopped sleeping seem to be moving away with accelerating speed. It feels so strange, as if the me who used to go to sleep every night is not the real me, and the memories from back then are not really mine. This is how people change. But nobody realizes it. Nobody notices. Only I know what happens. I could try to tell them, but they wouldn't understand. They wouldn't believe me. Or if they did believe me, they would have absolutely no idea what I'm feeling. They would only see me as a threat to their inductive world view.

I am changing, though. *Really* changing.

How long have I been sitting here? Hands on the wheel. Eyes closed. Staring into the sleepless darkness.

Suddenly I'm aware of a human presence, and I come to myself again. There's somebody out there. I open my eyes and look around. Someone is outside the car. Trying to open the door. But the doors are locked. Dark shadows on either side of the car, one at each door. Can't see their faces. Can't make out their clothing. Just two dark shadows, standing there.

Sandwiched between them, my Civic feels tiny—like a little pastry box. It's being rocked from side to side. A fist is pounding on the right-hand window. I know it's not a policeman. A policeman would never pound on the glass like this and would never shake my car. I hold my breath. What should I do? I can't think straight. My underarms are soaked. I've got to get out of here. The key. Turn the key. I reach out for it and turn it to the right. The starter grinds.

The engine doesn't catch. My hand is shaking. I close my eyes and turn the key again. No good. A sound like fingernails clawing a giant wall. The motor turns and turns. The men—the dark shadows—keep shaking my car. The swings get bigger and bigger. They're going to tip me over!

There's something wrong. Just calm down and think, then everything will be O.K. Think. Just think. Slowly. Carefully. Something is wrong.

Something is wrong.

But what? I can't tell. My mind is crammed full of thick darkness. It's not taking me anywhere. My hands are shaking. I try pulling out the key and putting it back in again. But my shaking hand can't find the hole. I try again and drop the key. I curl over and try to pick it up. But I can't get hold of it. The car is rocking back and forth. My forehead slams against the steering wheel.

I'll never get the key. I fall back against the seat, cover my face with my hands. I'm crying. All I can do is cry. The tears keep pouring out. Locked inside this little box, I can't go anywhere. It's the middle of the night. The men keep rocking the car back and forth. They're going to turn it over. —HARUKI MURAKAMI

(*Translated, from the Japanese, by Jay Rubin.*)

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PROFILES

FIGURING IT OUT

BY the age of thirty-seven, the ground of a person's life is more or less sown. The task of tasks has been taken up, ignored, or irremediably obscured. "Unwritten poetry twists the hearts of people in their thirties," the novelist Elizabeth Bowen once wrote. By the end of the fourth decade, we've detached ourselves from the mentors and stand on the bridge of our own story, looking forward and looking back. Already, some of us are faltering and losing heart. "I've done my best," we say, with a sigh. "The next, the rest, the others must carry on." With any luck, the artists are among the company that presses on; if not, one way or another, they begin to die.

Eliot Fisk, the classical guitarist, is thirty-seven, and in him the poignant late-thirties moment seems enormously intensified. He's a remarkable musician—a great artist, many would say—and he's abundantly, mercurially alive. How many hundreds and hundreds of times has he played the chaconne from the great D-minor Partita by Johann Sebastian Bach? Yet not one of his encounters with that piece is ever the same as the one before; each marks the change and evolution in his life. This mirroring of the growing by the playing is not a simple matter; there are confusions, distortions, refractions. Eliot Fisk is not a simple man. And for a long time there was in his life the jarring, heroic imbalance of precocity. For a long time, his music knew more than he knew. It seemed more shapely, truer, more appropriate for expressing emotions—light-years ahead of his outer self. Fisk made the sacrifice that every virtuoso makes, spending hours of his childhood and youth alone, practicing in his room. His oldest, closest friends say that his adolescence was unusually long. Meanwhile, in that private world he shared with his instrument—hanging close over its heartbeat, like a mother with her child—he was developing prodigious, awesome technique. Over and over, he willed his fingers to make the rhythms and harmonies he could hear in his mind. Using this prodigious technique, he kept struggling to make himself whole, to resolve the "perpetual tritone" he believes every artist has inside. "This interval of the augmented fourth, we keep trying to turn it into a third or a sixth," he says. "But, you know, this tritone inside us, it never wants to resolve."

Collet

ONE evening last spring, Fisk was at the home of a stylish couple who live in the Village. They had invited around fifty of their friends to enjoy a little grazing and rococo socializing and then sit on folding gilt chairs in the fading light and hear Fisk play. For him, the program—some Mendelssohn, some Paganini caprices, the Bach chaconne, some Sylvius Leopold Weiss—would serve as a rehearsal for a recital he was to give at the Metropolitan Museum the following night. (He was winding up an American tour and was on the point of returning to Salzburg, where he is a professor at the Mozarteum.) The occupants of several rows of gilt chairs obscured my view of Fisk while he was playing, but I greatly admired his powerful, expressive sound. Afterward, I went up to where he was standing, with his back to the refreshment table, and told him so. He had blue eyes behind thick spectacles, and a long, narrow, mobile face under a thatch of wavy dark-blond hair. He looked older than thirty-seven and younger than thirty-seven. In fact, he seemed open from moment to moment to a whole range of possibilities of how a man of thirty-seven might be supposed to look. He wore an ascot, and a double-breasted dark-blue jacket so tightly and roundly buttoned over his chest that I had an impression of a piece of Biedermeier in some bygone Middle European salon. As soon as this impression formed, it vanished and was replaced by another: of a loose-limbed, open quality that Americans seem to acquire in high school or inherit along with the Constitution, and that is never found in a European—not even one wearing sneakers.

Eliot Fisk shook my hand. It was probably a sign of his post-performance distraction that he squeezed it as well. Generally, he tries not to grip at all. His hands, naturally large and strong, are so developed by plucking and fingering and stretching to the guitar strings that he has been known to hurt people with his handshake, especially if they're wearing rings. He was in that vulnerable, heightened hybrid space known to most performers. He looked vaguely at bay, and vaguely elated. His psychic aura was kinetic. It was as if all the atoms of Eliot Fisk were still making their way back from where he had been with his music, or were now swirling in the air around his person. I felt him reassembling before my eyes, and felt some doubt as to how the process was going. Whether the place at the center of the music had been one of absolute calm or of demonic dissonance and Blakean visions, I cannot say. But, exchanging amenities with this intelligent and affable man, I felt the turbulence of his returning journey. Somewhere, a movie was running backward and very fast: Alice's rabbit hurtled upward out of the rabbit hole; a man who has bathed in a cool pool on a hot day was leaping in reverse, in rapid animation—jerkily reknotting his necktie, throwing on his jacket, and making a top-speed jackknife into his pants.

"I'm glad you enjoyed it," Eliot Fisk's voice was saying. "Playing the classical guitar, the quietest of all the instruments, in the noisiest age in history is a pretty oddball thing to do. It's fairly esoteric. But I believe I can make a contribution. I'd much rather, for my own conscience, have had the talent to find the cure for AIDS or find some miracle technology to get rid of oil slicks and toxic wastes. If I'd been an environmental engineer, it would be morally better. Or if I could find a way to make a difference in the realm of social justice. But these are pipe dreams. I'm not any of these other things."

ELIOT FISK was born in 1954, near Philadelphia. His father's family was of Jewish descent, and his mother's family were Scots Baptists. Both parents became Quakers. His father taught business administration at the Wharton business school. "He's a dreamer," his son says. "He's interested in ecologically sound and socially just marketing." Eliot also describes his father as being, at bottom, an alienated Jewish intellectual, and says that his own Jewish side sometimes wars with the Scottish half. "The warmer, sensualist Jewish side fighting with the disciplined, severe Scottish side!" Characteristically, he goes further, with an analysis of the "oil and vinegar" of his heritage, the way he analyzes a new piece he is learning—breaking it down movement by movement, phrase by phrase, note by note. "Underneath the severe Scottish side there's the sensitivity that's deep in that culture," he says, "and underneath the Jewish spontaneity there's also tremendous discipline—as well as great anxiety."

Photographs of the baby Eliot show him reaching out to grasp at the world with hands whose size and agility would in later years give him advantages over other guitarists. "The big hands are a gift from my mother's side," he says. "The thumbs I get from my father, but the rest is pure Hamilton and MacAdam." The women relatives used their big Scots hands for knitting and baking; he remembers his mother using her fingers to test the pastry of her pies. To the inherited advantage he added the solitary training, which gave him phenomenal dexterity, his stretched-out fingers tipped on the left hand with bulbous, fleshy pads developed through stopping the strings on the fingerboard. The fourth finger on his left hand is almost half an inch longer than its mate on the right. "That's from one particular étude I was playing just about the time my hands started to grow," he says, with a chuckle. From the cradle, too, Eliot had great aural sensitivity. His mother remembers the screeches of indignation he would make when she rustled wax paper in his presence. And then, when he was three, there came an event of profound significance: the arrival of a baby brother, who was discovered to have Down's syndrome.

"The idea of the Quaker religion is that God is in each person," Fisk says, explaining the high ideals of nonviolence and social justice imbuing the atmosphere of his childhood home and the Friends' schools he attended early on. He is no longer a practicing Quaker, and he is today fluent in half a dozen European languages—he and his wife, Lydia, who is German, speak mostly German at home. But no thread in the tapestry of Eliot Fisk's identity seems stronger than that of an incorruptibly upright eighteenth-century Philadelphia Friend. And no language seems more natural to him than vaguely Biblical phrases or lines from Milton. He is literary to a degree rare among musicians—especially virtuoso instrumentalists. From his background he retains the idea that books may be read not so much for entertainment (although he rereads Shakespeare for pleasure) as for inspiration, a sort of spiritual leg up. As a young recitalist travelling all over the world, he would unpack in each new hotel room his battered Dante in the original Italian. By all accounts, his childhood was extraordinarily sheltered. There was no television, and relatively little exposure to popular culture. The home became a forcing house for the growth of Eliot's inner world. "My upbringing was very benevolent, very good, but rather unreal," he says now. "My parents wanted to make a nest where harsh realities would not intrude. And then they were so involved in taking care of my brother."

When Eliot was seven years old, his parents bought a guitar, hoping that playing folk music would be something the family could do together. But only the older boy took to the instrument, and he did that with a passion only after he and his brother (who had been, he says, "immensely close") were separated. When Eliot was eleven, his father accepted a visiting professorship in Sweden, and Eliot and his parents moved there for the academic year, leaving behind the younger boy, who would never again live permanently with his family. (He now lives in a group home upstate, where Eliot, who speaks of him with a surge of love and admiration, often visits him.) Eliot was put into a local school and was obliged to learn Swedish—a temporary hardship, which gave a push to his continuing fascination with languages. "When I'm in Italy, I think in Italian, same in Germany, same in Spain," he says. "I have a good ear, and it's really just like reading clefs. You press a button, and all of a sudden it's up a stop or down a stop." Sweden was a turning point for the boy. Cut off from his country and his brother, he was desolately lonely. "I came back from my first day of school and told my parents I wished I was dead. I got that line from 'Huckleberry Finn'! Then I started coming home and practicing every day for hours. That's when I got serious about the guitar."

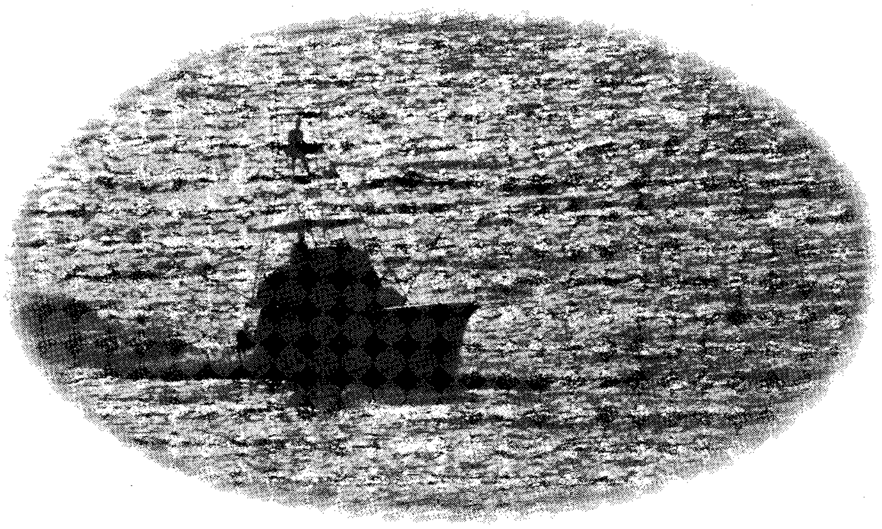
d. ehrenberg

ELIOT FISK crosses the stage of the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium, at the Metropolitan Museum, with the elastic, slightly rolling gait of a ballplayer, which he was as a teen-ager. He's wearing the double-breasted jacket again, but unbuttoned and hanging loose. He holds the guitar by its neck and down by his leg, like a farm boy holding a chicken. Onstage in a nice hall well filled with paying customers, he's far more at ease than he was at the private soirée. This is his living room, his turf. ("I didn't know any of the people there," he said of the previous evening. "I didn't expect Misha Dichter to show up and sit in the front row. That scared me to death!") He puts his foot on the footstool; he fiddles with the tuning pegs; he chats in a modest, kindly manner about Frescobaldi and the Baroque lute. He's charming us, he's drawing us in. A classical-guitar recital is the very opposite of a night at the symphony. When the music begins, the level of sound goes right down. The audience, which has banged, talked, and program-rustled its way into its seats—and, with luck, blown its nose and got its coughing over with—now holds its breath and leans attentively toward the solitary figure whose task is to take onto his knee a shapely stringed wooden box (an instrument "still in the bow-and-arrow stage," Fisk says) and make it *sing*. The Spanish maestro Andrés Segovia—the Titan, the founding father of all classical-guitar playing in the twentieth century—knew how to get an audience of many thousands to sit for his unamplified sound in a respectful silence; it was called the "Segovia hush."

People love the guitar because it is so human. It's like a person—a person with a god inside, when things go well. "When the open heart speaks, the open heart listens," the saying goes. This evening at the Metropolitan, Fisk is very open; his audience listens from the open heart. Even playing something light and worldly—something to which a seventeenth-century gallant might handily dance or flirt—Fisk brings to the music great richness of color, a kind of fire. His concentration is so intense that his long, intelligent face seems to melt. The atoms swirl. He turns his bent head to peer with his ears at the strings; he comes close with his weak eyes, the better to hear. Seeing him purposefully searching, molelike, with his huge, strange hands, you think for a moment, This man is blind! There are spastic, gymnastic movements; the mouth drops open; grimaces shift across his face, as in a fun-house mirror. You think, This man is definitely insane. The right hand, sweeping out in a gesture of infinite grace, scatters a dazzle of notes. After all, this is an amazing performance. This man's a genius, you think. The Bach passes through like a wind, clears a space in the world as if for the very first time. Eliot Fisk looks bushed. Young, rueful, slightly awed.

"It's hard to follow the chaconne with anything," he tells the audience. His face comes back in focus and gets a puckish look. He'll play some of Paganini's caprices. In the early nineteenth century, Paganini wrote the book on virtuoso tricks. He was rumored to have made a pact with the Devil to play the violin that way. (He played the guitar, it seems, with equal skill.) Fisk grins. He gives a little wiggle of his shoulders, of his fingers, of the shoulders again. He leaps in. Afterward, there are "Bravo!"s, applause. Fisk beams at us, and bows. We are happy, we are nourished. We are the pastry crust being patted by his mom.

SO many people have been able to play the guitar badly, down the years, that listeners are traditionally astounded when they hear it being played extraordinarily well. It has also been common, in its history, for the guitar to keep sliding down the social scale. The seventeenth-century diarist Samuel Pepys was snobbishly loyal to its predecessor the lute, which had more strings and had to be tuned much more often. Hearing the famous Italian guitarist Corbetta play at the court of King Charles II, Pepys was reluctantly impressed. "I was mightily troubled that all the pains should have been taken upon so bad an instrument," he said grumpily. Recently, here in the city, I spoke to the classical-guitar maker Thomas Humphrey, who seemed to suggest that the guitar, three centuries after Pepys, is behind the eight ball still. "In the life of all guitarists, once they discover they're



great musicians—or, in some cases, such as Eliot's, great artists—I'm sure there has to be a moment when they look back and think, My God! I could have done this on the *piano!*" That thought may not have struck Fisk, though. He took on the "lost cause" of the guitar when he was young, with all the tenacious loyalty he brings to his relations with people. Humphrey is a loyalist, too. As friend and instrument-maker to many professional guitarists, including Fisk, he is at the heart of a rarefied community known as "the guitar world"—or, more exasperatedly, "the guitar ghetto." And he is the instrument's great booster. "It is the instrument of the day!" he says. "In our time, the guitar is the essential prop for . . . all of life!"

To the outsider, it seems that even the most passionate lovers of the classical guitar take pleasure in reeling off the list of its shortcomings. It has a small, quiet voice, with very little resonance. A note, once plucked, barely lingers on the air. The guitar scares off contemporary composers, who may like its rich harmonies and rich-sounding chords (it is often called "the little orchestra") but find them baffling to work with, and quite different from the same chords played on the keyboard. It's hard to play the guitar well, and even harder to play it so well that you stop obsessing about whether you squeak on a string, and simply play from the heart, the way Eliot Fisk does. The guitarist's mental computer must choose from an infinite set of permutations and possibilities. The same note may be played on three or four different strings. And plucking with a particular millimetre of the carefully shaped finger- or thumbnail, in combination with a portion of the fingertip, can make all the difference in the world.

Chief among the classical guitar's liabilities for the modern recitalist is its lack of repertoire—at least, compared with the violin or the piano. Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms are a few of the major composers who never wrote a note for the guitar. The great Bach solo works played by Fisk (and by many of today's concert guitarists, following the path laid down by Segovia) were written for the violin—like the chaconne—or for the cello. Magpie-like, the guitar must borrow from other instruments. Of the eight works that Fisk played that evening, only two were written originally for his instrument; the others were designed for violin, piano, harpsichord, and lute. Fisk views the mingy repertoire as a glorious frontier. He works enthusiastically with living composers to create new works—most notably, of late, with the Italian Luciano Berio, who has composed a virtuoso *sequenza* for Fisk and is now at work with him adding orchestral accompaniment to it. Fisk thinks that every guitarist has a duty to stretch and expand; he often tours with other musicians and plays chamber music with them ("I've spent so much of my life alone," he says), and he is stimulated by the work of transcribing from other instruments. He describes transcription in terms of sensitive translation from a foreign literature—faithful more to meaning and color than to literalness.

To this day, the classical guitar struggles with a second-class citizenship. Segovia used to say, grandly, that he found the guitar in the gutter and raised it to the level of the concert stage. To be sure, there were times in

How often do you watch

fish darting playfully about? Or listen to the

haunting repetition of a gull's cry? Surrender to the gentle

rocking of the sea? Feel the breeze kiss your skin? Breathe

the sweetness of the Atlantic air? Let that air settle on

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history when the guitar was all the rage with kings and nobles. Louis XIV spent more time playing it than was altogether good for his subjects, and the guitar appears in many of Watteau's magical paintings of gardens and *fêtes galantes*. But the guitar has mostly been a friend to people who were poor and marginalized, and has often slipped with them through the social cracks. “A nineteenth-century piano was not so much an instrument as a vested interest . . . a piece of real estate,” one historian of the guitar writes. In the age of Dickens, Queen Victoria, and the respectable, solidly engineered grand piano, the humble guitar lost ground. It became a feminine accessory, something that made its home in tenements, or something that cowboys and romantic poets played. Yet the guitar and its antecedents are as old as time: when the gods made Orpheus the first mortal to receive the gift of music, he got some strings to pluck. The sight of a man with a guitar suggests an archetype, something deep in what Jung called the collective unconscious. (“I was nuts for Jung as a teen-ager,” Fisk says. “I used to read him all the time.”)

The first guitarlike instruments probably came from Baghdad, and the guitar reached Spain with the Moors, and then made its way north across Europe, developing as it went. As for the flamenco-guitar tradition, it took root in the fifteenth century, when Andalusian Gypsies inherited the “Oriental” music of the Moors and the Jews, both of whom were being expelled from Spain. Although Segovia admired flamenco and had it in his blood, his own career—his mission—was quite separate. And his twentieth-century successors—his “spiritual grandchildren,” as he called the classical guitarists who came after him—are for the most part insulated from the mighty populist tide of electric guitar and rock and roll. Broadly speaking, this stemmed from African-American music, and from the stringed instruments (similar to those the North African Muslims took to Spain) brought to America on slave ships and encouraged by plantation owners, who forbade the more subversive tribal drums. The American guitar sound evolved through Delta blues, hillbilly, country and Western, and Elvis Presley, and then echoed across the ocean to Europe and back again, in the era of the Beatles. In fact, Thomas Humphrey, the guitar-maker, has a theory that the reason there is now an unusually large crop of professional classical guitarists in their late thirties and early forties is that at a tender age they all saw John, Paul, George, and Ringo on the Ed Sullivan show and demanded lessons.

“The Beatles had no influence on me whatsoever,” says Eliot Fisk, good-humoredly.

THE morning after the Metropolitan recital, Fisk was up and about early on the Upper West Side, where he keeps a pied-à-terre. He was dressed for running. (He would be fasting, skipping breakfast that day, since he was flying to Europe; he is much concerned with finding the formula to beat jet lag.) It was a cool, sunny day, and a puckery lemon light shone from the piles of fruit outside a Korean grocer's. Fisk's eyes looked very bright blue, behind spectacles whose frames were carefully matched to the kingfisher color of a stylish warmup suit. Last night's audience would have been hard-pressed to recognize in this metamorphosis the man they had heard play. Fisk never strikes you as a fellow who simply gets up in the morning and puts on his clothes. There is the double-breasted blazer; there is the ascot; there have been experiments with long hair and sideburns, even some surprising black leather pants; there are European shirts and neckties; there are Rockport shoes. This protean, experimental quality fits right in with his playing. “What intrigues me about music is the opportunity to enter into completely different mental states just by manipulating pitches,” he told me once. I mentioned Eliot's style of dress to one of his woman friends. (He has a large circle of adoring friends, some of whom he's known since high school, and keeps in touch with them by fax and letter.) “Ah, yes,” the woman said, with a smile. “You see, he's figuring it out.”

Here he was on Broadway in his bright-blue warmup suit. A homeless man came lumbering up. He was a big, heavyset black man, whose face was disfigured by half-healed welts and ugly swellings around the eyes and mouth.

“Kenneth!” Fisk cried. “What ever *happened* to you?”

The two men embraced. Not many people know the man by his name, Kenneth Jackson, and an even smaller group would submit as cheerfully to his bear hug as Eliot Fisk did. (Fisk also, after his return to Europe, sent the homeless man a friendly postcard, via an intermediary.) But many neighbors and customers of Zabar's are familiar with Jackson by sight and sound. He used to be forever singing, in a voice like Nat King Cole's. Then he took to sitting and greeting passersby from behind a rickety table with a giant, narrow-necked jar on it and a sign that read “Help the Homeless.” A handful of pennies would be scattered at the bottom of the jar and a couple of dollar bills would flutter forlornly behind its green glass, like fish on the floor of a dying ocean. Around the time Fisk ran into him, Jackson wasn't doing any singing. His heart wasn't in the business with the jar, either; his patter had become more of a lament and less of a performance. Not long before, a gang of youths had set upon him and beaten him up with baseball bats and a chain. He reënacted the event for Fisk with gusto and, it was clear, with a rather more vigorous self-defense than he had been able to muster in the actual attack. “Pow!” he said, bobbing and weaving like a champ, and throwing shadow punches at the head of a nearby parking meter. “Pow! Pow! Pow!” Then he pointed at his face and looked mournful. “This is how they left me, all lopsided like this,” he said.

Fisk circled Jackson's shoulder with his arm and squeezed with the Hamilton-MacAdam hand. His scientifically shaped right-hand nails—treated with a secret tree-resin recipe from “a crazy Yugoslav who lives in Sweden”—gleamed against the other man's dingy sleeve.

“That's my man,” Jackson said, grinning. “He's got a grip on him like a steel *vise*.”

On their street corner, the two proceeded with an amiable conversation, courteously hearing each other out on their common ground—a certain open-minded inquiry about spiritual matters, the life of Martin Luther King, music (although Jackson seemed to think Fisk's instrument was the trumpet), and the way each was dressed. The differences were skated over. Jackson has scraped by for a long time in the big city, often in the cold and the dark. His ideas have a way of bounding out

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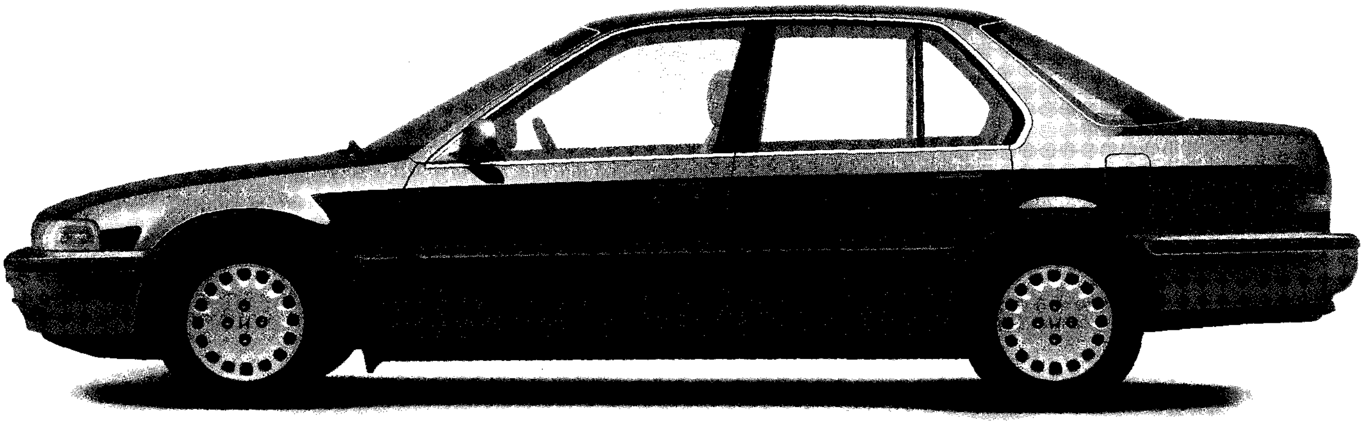

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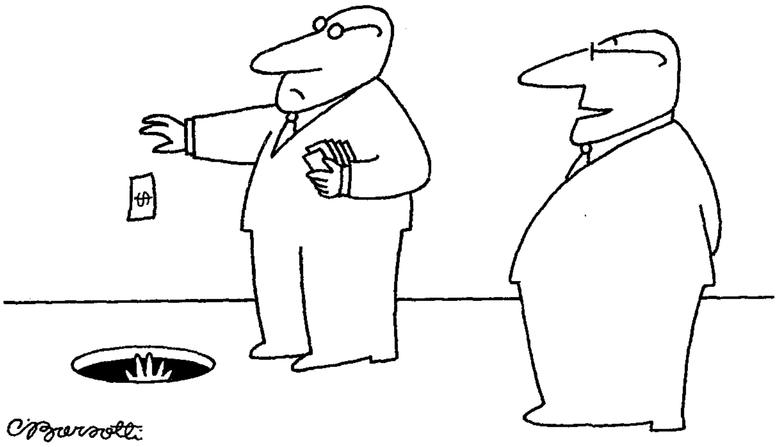
with the vigor of circus lions and then running round and round in circles. Fisk is summa cum laude from Yale. (His mentor there was the late Ralph Kirkpatrick, the harpsichordist, whose influence explains Fisk's great affection for arrangements of Scarlatti. At Yale, Fisk also founded a guitar department.) He leads the formidably busy life of a successful international musician. Over the next few months, his schedule would take him to Cologne, where he would play a concert with a symphony orchestra and one for the improbable-sounding combination of guitar and organ. (From 1982 to 1989, he was a professor at the Musikhochschule, in Cologne.) He would record the Berio *sequenza* for Austrian TV. He was booked to tour the Soviet Union with a well-known Lithuanian string quartet, but, as it turned out, the August coup caused the trip to be postponed. He used the time to record in a London church, for the MusicMasters label, Paganini's famous twenty-four caprices for solo violin, which Fisk had transcribed for guitar. For once, Fisk had no plans to visit Italy in the summer, although he often does and he is very popular there. "Italy has always been my stomping ground," he says. But he would be in Spain—teaching a master class in Cordova and then spending some time with Lydia in a house they have in Granada, the ancient center of Moorish culture, the site of the Alhambra, and the scene of many events in Segovia's life. (The Maestro made his début there in 1909, as a boy of sixteen, and he continued to spend time there, off and on, until his death, in 1987, at the age of ninety-four.) It would be another five months before Fisk's travels would bring him—via Los Angeles and Philadelphia—back to New York.

"I ain't going to let you go," Kenneth Jackson said. "I'll throw out an old line and hook you in, like in that book."

" 'Moby Dick,' " Fisk said. He offered to run back to his apartment and fetch Jackson some of his unwanted clothes.

"How tall are you?" Jackson said, brightening up.

"Five-ten."



"We still haven't worked out all the kinks in the capitalist system, have we, J.B.?"

"What are you round the waist?"

"Thirty-one and a half."

"Oh, you're in *good* shape. No way your pants going to fit me."

Fisk unzipped the kingfisher-colored jacket and produced some photographs. An ecstatically happy-looking Eliot was posing with a vivacious blonde. "That's my wife," he said proudly. He produced a second photograph, of an attractive dark-skinned young girl—Lydia's twelve-year-old daughter, Mullah, whom Eliot has lovingly helped to rear. (Her father is a man Eliot describes as "an African revolutionary." Lydia Fisk also has a twenty-year-old son, a jazz musician.) "And this is my daughter," Fisk told Jackson, showing him the photograph of Mullah.

Jackson studied the picture of the blond man and his blond wife and then the picture of the young black girl in silence. At last, he pointed to the picture of the ecstatically happy-looking Fisk, which was taken after his wedding, in a Quaker ceremony, a couple of years back. "Just look at that face!" Jackson said. "That man's got music written all *over* him."

SEGOVIA thought the world of Eliot Fisk. Across the sixty-one-year age gap there was real love and respect between the two men. The octogenarian Segovia first heard the teen-age Fisk play some Bach and some Scarlatti in the suite that the Maestro was in the habit of taking at the Westbury Hotel. From the first, Segovia recognized a completely original talent—an extraordinary mind and technique still untamed at that stage—and a volcano of emotion that was almost too raw to bear. "One of the most brilliant, intelligent, and gifted young artists of our time," Segovia said of Fisk, in a rare formal endorsement. That came after Fisk had been denied a prize at an international guitar competition. The old man's faith must have been a balm to the young man's ego. From his experience with this and other contests (winning, losing, judging), Fisk has the gravest doubts about the whole idea of competitions. He thinks they fan disharmony and rivalry in the incestuous guitar ghetto, and distract young guitarists from their primary purpose of reaching out to the big world. "Classical music is under attack, particularly in America," he says. "The enemy of a guitarist is not another guitarist." Segovia, with his velvet vest and romantic ribbon tie, was an artist in an earlier, nineteenth-century mold. He was that phenomenon few of us experience intimately: a great person, larger than life. "Being with him was like being in a room with a mountain," Fisk says of Segovia. With his talent and his charisma, Segovia had stormed the doors of the world's recital halls, silencing the snobs (numerous in Spain) who thought it a sacrilege to play Bach on an instrument from the streets and low-life bars. Deeply rooted in the machismo of Andalusia, he viewed his guitar as a woman, to be sheltered from the corruptions of the world and induced, in an intimate relationship, to meet him at the place where spirit and senses catch fire and burn.

Segovia had genius and presence. He took pride in having been self-taught. "I am my own master and my own student," he liked to say. His life was long, generous, and filled with passion. He was an intimate of D'Annunzio and of Picasso; at home in his library in Madrid, he had thousands of books, in several languages. An earlier library and an earlier home—in Barcelona—were destroyed during the Civil War, in which he took an anti-Republican stance. By temperament, Segovia was a monarchist; in later years he called himself apolitical. But his support for Franco's brand of Fascism led to a blacklisting in North American musical circles during and after the Second World War. The Maestro blamed his troubles on an international Jewish conspiracy, and the experience seems to have awakened a historically ancient Spanish anti-Semitism in him. Yet by the time his career resumed at full tilt here in the fifties, and right up to its end, his closest American friends and associates were Jewish.

It's no simple matter to be the last, favored disciple of a great old man. It's a heady, potent, poignant encounter, for which there are prices to be paid. In many ways, Fisk is Segovia's heir. The largeness you sense in him; the passion for teaching and repertoire-building; the love of melody, tonality, and the long lyric line; the evangelism in the instrument's cause; the drive to grab an audience by the *soul*—these qualities of Fisk's were in Segovia first. "Of all the guitarists who came after him, Segovia thought Eliot was the most *complete*," I was told by a man who often saw them together. In the early years, the meetings had a Delphic, ritual routine. Fisk would come to play for Segovia at the Westbury, almost always at five o'clock in the afternoon.

Fisk's friend and frequent collaborator the composer Robert Beaser has known him since they were undergraduates at Yale. His first impression was of "an amazingly strange guy" sitting under a tree on the Old Campus and playing the chaconne "like a man possessed." Beaser, a more conventional young American music major, with a head full of Stravinsky, Bartók, Berg, and the Beatles, was startled to discover the private world of Eliot Fisk, ringing with the esoteric sounds of Froberger, Frescobaldi, and the British virginalists. Beaser took Fisk to his first Woody Allen movie. And he remembers Fisk returning to New Haven after one of his pilgrimages to the Westbury, and saying that Segovia had just told him to follow his own star. "There is no more I can teach you," Segovia had said. "Eliot felt bemused," Beaser says. "There was this hope and optimism about being set free, but trepidation about what he had to do." This was an awesome nudge, a vote of confidence from a living legend.

AFTER the Fisks returned from Sweden to Philadelphia, when Eliot was twelve, he had what turned out to be his only consistent guitar lessons, lasting for a couple of years. (He was never Segovia's student in any formal sense.) His teacher was an engineer from I.B.M., who had learned all that he knew from listening very closely to Segovia's many records; he drove the boy hard. Then, when Eliot was fourteen, his family moved to Syracuse, and he entered high school there. It was an ejection from Eden, another rude shock. At first, he felt isolated from his classmates, and was given to using what a friend from those years calls "humongous" words for saying the simplest things. He seemed to be the only student who was against the Vietnam War; while he was collecting Moratorium signatures, many of his friends were working to elect James Buckley to the Senate. At first, he kept quiet about the guitar and lived for summer vacations, when he would slip off to Aspen, Colorado, to be with other young guitarists around Oscar Ghiglia, who had been in his time (and at first hand) a student of Segovia's. But Eliot Fisk pulled through, getting the idea that he was not the only smart kid in school ("I was a snoot," he says) and becoming popular enough to be elected to the Student Council. And classmates, jocks and all, would turn out to hear him play his earliest recitals in local churches and schools.

To date, Fisk's life has been a series of abandoned cocoons; not always gracefully, he keeps right on busting out. He is the first artist in his family, unless you count his great-uncle Jesse Feinberg, who never did bust out. Feinberg was a gifted pianist, who played Chopin so well that people would stop to listen under his open window. "I imagine natural musicality, lots of gestures and stuff," Fisk says. "But he never got out of his mother's clutches. He was a dentist. He lived and died alone, a miserable man." After high school, Yale also came as a rude shock at first. Now, though, it was his instrument that distanced him, just slightly, from his music-major peers. "Eliot has never felt a part of anything, completely," Beaser says. "He's always the outsider. No matter where he is, he's always just visiting." After Yale, there were half a dozen years in New York City, spent deepening the friendship with Segovia (in latter years they spoke together in Spanish) and getting launched as a professional. Fisk's first important recital, at Alice Tully Hall in 1976, was under the auspices of Rose Augustine, doyenne of the New York guitar

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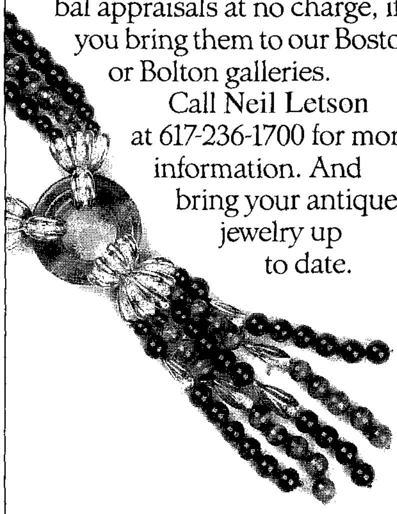

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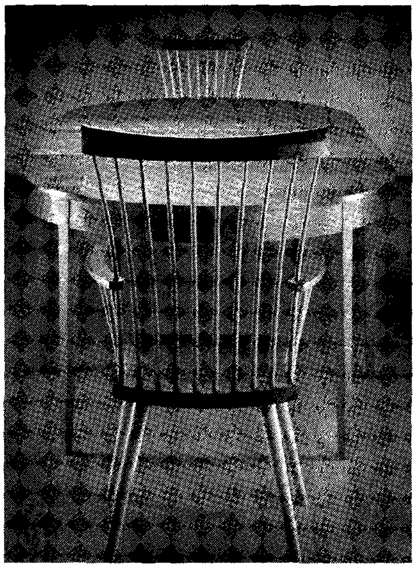

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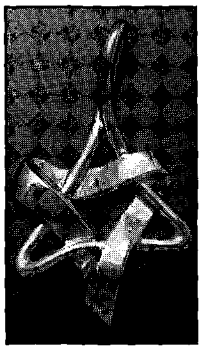

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world. Mrs. Augustine and her late husband, Albert, were close friends of Segovia, who lived with them for many years. She still runs a guitar-string factory and a magazine called *Guitar Review*, and is an active patron of young musicians.

Among his contemporaries in the classical-guitar world, Fisk has sometimes been a controversial figure, inspiring jealous detractors as well as great respect. "For the guitar world, I'm always too something," he says. "Too fast, too loud, too soft, too emotional. But many people who are drawn to the guitar are retiring violets, apt to be shocked by anything." He is depressed by the idea of an audience of people who play the guitar themselves—"No novelist could survive on sales to other novelists," he says—and is determined to leap out of the guitar ghetto and reach a larger audience. "More and more, I feel this tremendous desire to have contact with people, to communicate. There's this wonderful phrase in the Invocation of 'Paradise Lost'—'Justify the ways of God to men.' That's the responsibility of an interpreter—to make the music really *speak* to people, to their core. I'll go all out for that. Naturally, some people are going to be upset. I think musicians are brought up to try to *please* too much. If you're not upsetting anybody, what good are you?"

In 1982, Fisk emerged from the New York City guitar world and moved to Cologne. "Going to Europe was very important to me—the break," he says. "All the languages came from there, almost all the composers whose music I've loved so much. I thought, I've got to get to the bottom of this, I've got to figure it out. I thought I'd hang out in Europe for a couple of years, learn German. But then I met Lydia."

"Have you met Lydia?" friends of the couple ask me. "She is not a conventional woman." And Fisk says, "She's a fireball!"—as if after their nine years or so together this continued to delight him. His face lights up when he speaks of her. Clearly, at the thought of her he has the gratitude and humility of a complex, cerebral man who spent much of his youth pole-vaulting over the material world and funnelling a passionately emotional nature almost entirely through the guitar. By her husband's account, Lydia Fisk is bold, brave, and occasionally very *loud*. "She's a *Lebenskünstlerin*, an artist of life," he says. "I admire that. I'm trying to translate dots and dashes from the musical page into life—into something that touches and moves people. But she goes straight at life itself." There are occasional conflicts for him at home between his need to be alone with his instrument and the demands of family life. But his sometimes tempestuous partnership with Lydia is linked to his creative freedom: it is another of his passports for the voyage out. "I grew up in a bourgeois home, but I'm not at all a bourgeois person," he says. "I have tendencies to be conventional—I can slip into that. But my nature is to be much freer, more bohemian. I'm interested in breaking down the barriers, getting rid of the inhibitions about being honestly what you are."

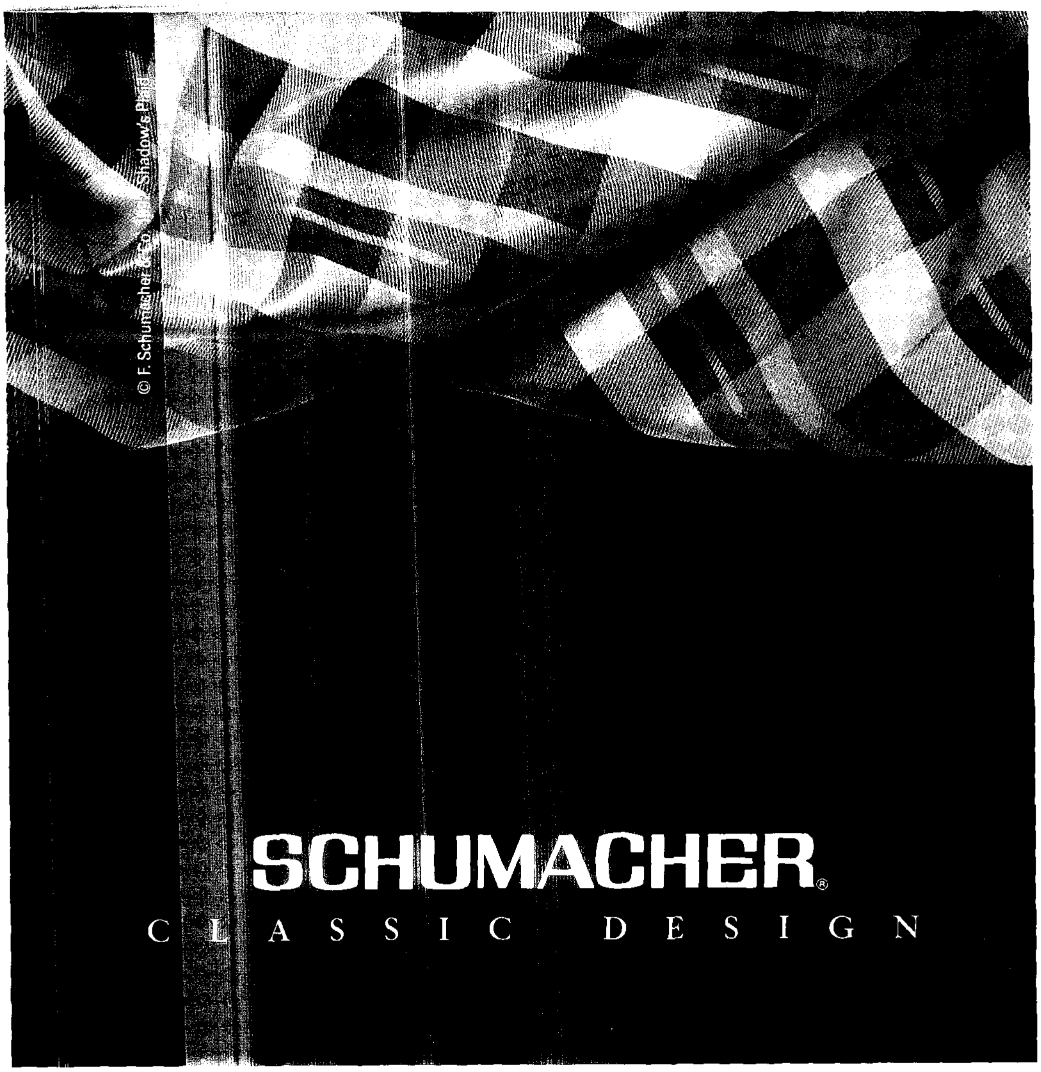
He will do anything to get his students to loosen up, he says—"scream, yell, dance, throw them around." They are in jeopardy from the surrounding Germanic perfectionism, he explains, as well as from the tunnel vision of the Conservatory. "Perfection just keeps you from your fountain of truth, freezes you right up at the moment of creation. There's too much head learning in Europe, too much automatic respect for the authority of the professor. In America, there's a much longer tradition of free debate. In Europe, the average level of achievement is high, but the peaks—the possibilities for individuation—are fewer. Europeans are not old hands at speaking their minds. Even when they're alone with their friends, society is in the room dictating what to do. Education is in a terrible state in America, and that's a very dangerous thing for a democracy. But still there's that looseness, a certain freedom here, that I love. You don't think, Is this permitted? Or feel something always squeezing you in and pounding you down. I've been treated fantastically well in Europe, but every time I set foot in America again I feel a rush of pure joy."

As part of his students' busting-out training he encourages them to disagree with him, he says, and tries to cut them loose as soon as he can. "I think I maintained my own disciple role too long, out of respect and loyalty," he says. When Fisk speaks of Segovia, you feel a haze, an afterglow of mingled emotions—some vestige of the bemused undergraduate pouring his heart out to his friend Beaser back at Yale. Perhaps the relationship with a monumental mentor can, like the tritone, never be fully resolved. Can a man with the charisma of a Segovia ever really cut a young man loose? Would a young man want it? "He always *said* you should find your own path . . ." Fisk told me, his voice trailing off reflectively. "He was more indulgent with me, because he knew I was so crazy about him and I would never really challenge his authority." When Fisk speaks of Segovia, part of him seems somewhere in the past—paying homage to the "mountain," drawing a veil as if to hide some sacred thing—while the rest is in the present and the future, making a slightly guilty, defiant assertion of each generation's right to replace the last: to go on treading the earth and making new art.

A couple of years after Segovia's death, some of his letters were published in book form, and Fisk reviewed them for *Guitar Review*. His article is full of love for Segovia, of compassion for the unfolding of a creative life against the backdrop of the century. Fisk also grapples manfully, in these elegant pages that feel like the very bosom of the guitar-world family, with the letters' exposure of Segovia's anti-Semitism. Jesse Feinberg's great-nephew Eliot Fisk—a Quaker Jew living in the country of Hitler's birth with his left-wing German wife—observes his hero Segovia's "tragic flaw" unblinkingly, forgives it, and moves on.

"I WISH now I'd jumped *in* earlier," Eliot Fisk told me the last time I spoke with him about his music, in New York. He made an expansive movement with the big hands. "Maybe that's why I feel this tremendous force exploding out from me now when I play. Earlier, it was always straining at the bit, trying to get out. Or coming out as quirks and mannerisms—idiosyncrasies. Now I'm able to let this force out more directly, and it comes out the way I want it more often than not. That's why you have to study—to have so much technique. When you're ready to really let it out, it comes out right and beautifully, with more and more probability. By now, I'm more able to go for broke every time. I always tried to go for broke, but I didn't quite know how. I know how better now."

—KENNEDY FRASER



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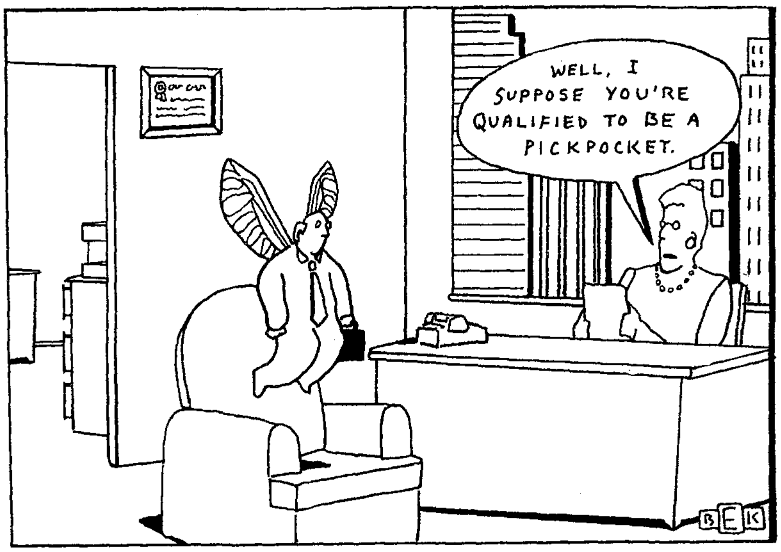
MUSICAL EVENTS

Stirring Subjects

MAHLER, that great conductor of the "Ring" and "Tristan," once described "Rienzi" as "Wagner's greatest work" and "the greatest musical drama ever composed." To be sure, he was immersed in "Rienzi" at the time, and was often overenthusiastic about whatever score he had in hand. (In an 1886 letter he wrote, "Tonight I am conducting 'La Juive'—I am utterly fascinated by this wonderful, magnificent work, and rank it among the greatest ever created.") Mahler exaggerated; but "Rienzi" has been underrated. It was first performed in 1842, the same year as Verdi's "Nabucco." In 1899, Ernest Newman in "A Study of Wagner" called it "young-man's music," well matched to the tastes of 1842 but for that reason "a weariness of the flesh to us, who have been educated by Wagner's later practice." In 1933, Newman, still a Wagnerian, heard "Don Carlos"—it had been revived at Covent Garden after an absence of sixty-six years—and declared that Verdi was not merely far from being a front-rank musician ("which few thinking people would claim for him today") but a poor dramatist, "content to repeat the same wretched formula in one work after another." Today, when serious operagoers are not unreceptive to the serious operas of Rossini and Donizetti, and no longer scorn what Verdi wrote before "Otello," "Rienzi" is heard with fresh ears. There have been modern revivals of Meyerbeer's once famous "Le Prophète," an opera that owes much to—that was in some respects modelled on—"Rienzi" but has little of its generous spirit. I never hear "Rienzi" without feeling a quick, almost uncritical response to the energy and copiousness of Wagner's youthful invention, and without being stirred by the grandeur of the subject and its handling. Wagner called "Le Prophète" a thing of "effects without causes." In Meyerbeer's opera, Fidès, the mezzo, interrupts the Prophet's procession with a coup de théâtre; in Wagner's, Adriano, the mezzo, interrupts the Tribune's with a noble plea. Meyerbeer's ballet is a novelty divertissement (the dancers arrive on roller skates), Wagner's a representation of tyrants overthrown and ancient and modern Rome united beneath the blessing of Peace. Wagner confessed that he wrote "Rienzi" to achieve a grand-opera success, "with all its scenic and musical splendor, its massive, vehement effects," but he added, "The material itself truly filled me with enthusiasm, and I included nothing unconnected with this enthusiasm." Verdi said much the same about his long, spectacular grand opera "Don Carlos"—which, like "Rienzi," proved too long for the theatres of the day and had to be abridged. Both composers—one in ardent youth, one in ardent maturity—found high cause to employ Meyerbeerian effects.

In New York, Eve Queler and her Opera Orchestra of New York have been the providers of "Rienzi," with performances in 1980, in Carnegie Hall; in 1982, in Fisher Hall; and again this month, in Carnegie. This year's principals were Monica Pick-Hieronimi, as Irene; Sharon Graham, as Adriano; and Reiner Goldberg, in the title role. The first was making her American début. Years ago, I heard her in Germany as a lyric coloratura. Her voice has grown dramatic and powerful without losing its shine or focus; she was a pleasing, steady, exhilarating performer. Miss Graham, the Santuzza of last year's City Opera "Cavalleria," sang with force, control, and conviction, but often too loud. She sacrificed words to volume, slighted and smudged the text, and—common failing of singers who strive for an impressive, wow-'em sound rather than communicative utterance—brought one, all-purpose vowel to notes at the top of or above the staff. But she *was* impressive—worth being severe about, worth urging toward verbal accuracy, since she holds the promise of being a major mezzo. Mr. Goldberg was apt to shout—but that is too blunt a way of putting it, for he had his moments. He shouted in tune; his words were incisive; quite often, he retained the lyrical fullness of tone that, twenty years ago, suggested that he might become the poetic Heldentenor we were waiting for. We have waited in vain, it seems; but as today's Heldentenors in their fifties go he is among the more acceptable. All three singers gave insufficient fullness to turns and graces—the "little notes" that Wagner deemed so important.

Miss Queler conducts Wagner with spirit, and of "Rienzi" she always gives us a fiery, bountiful presentation. The *Friedensboten*, the Roman youths of good family who process through the city proclaiming Rienzi's message of peace, were the American Boychoir—young angels who processed down a Carnegie aisle singing their long, unaccompanied chorus with sweetness and purity of tone, gentle fervor, and true intonation, and in confident German. For Rienzi's battle muster, the Valley Forge Military Academy and Junior College Regimental Chorus invaded the hall, marching uniformed, with drawn swords. From balconies, from the back of the hall, and through side doors flung open, ten trumpets (one of them Neil Balm), three trombones, and a tuba (David Braynard) blazed. Onstage, the Princeton Pro Musica was in full cry. Impossible not to be carried


WELL, I SUPPOSE YOU'RE QUALIFIED TO BE A PICKPOCKET.
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away! The smaller roles were strongly cast; the basses Philip Cokorinos (as Raimondo, the Papal Legate) and Kevin Short (as Colonna, a patrician) and the tenor Christopher Hux (as Baroncelli, a plebeian) deserve special mention.

THIS year's Lenten oratorio at Corpus Christi Church was Alessandro Scarlatti's "David." I found it slightly disappointing—less dramatic, emotional, and beautiful than his "Judith," last year, or his "Hagar and Ishmael," the year before. In Grove, Donald Grout wrote of "the opera-like version of the combat between David and Goliath." The two exchange challenges in amusingly rhymed verses. Goliath cries, "Draconem, leonem en provocat mus," to which David replies:

> Non imbelli duello puelli
> fera ferae iam fata quaeremus,
> non inulti, sed ulti cademus
> nec timemus pericula belli.

Goliath counters with:

> Saevo dente fremente leonem,
> qui non pavet et avet adire,
> fata subit, et cupit obire
> fumantemque videre Sionem.

"David," or "Davidis Pugna et Victoria," is the only surviving Scarlatti oratorio with a Latin libretto, but the jingles yield music more jingling than dramatic. The high point is David's aria "Tu mihi superum aeterne rex," declaimed largely in shining, steadfast monotones over a running bass, as he prepares for the combat. The slingshot engagement takes place offstage; a narrator tells of it in recitative. David returns from his victory to close the oratorio with a rondo-finale. Earlier, he has two attractive duets with Jonathan. But if I had encountered this score not knowing who composed it, I would not have guessed Scarlatti, that master of captivating melody.

Still, "David" was worth hearing. These annual oratorios in Corpus Christi—the three by Scarlatti were preceded by four of Stradella's—have brought history to life. They have refuted the textbooks' assertion that operas and oratorios were composed in essentially the same idiom. Louise Basbas conducted. Marion Beckenstein was a bright David, and Ruth Cunningham was an even brighter Jonathan; her soprano, exact and clear, rang out in the church's responsive acoustics. The accompanying ensemble—two violins, two violas, theorbo, and a tiny organ—sounded a shade skimpy, and underbassed.

MOZART—whom Edward Dent once described as Scarlatti's best pupil—left three operas unfinished: "Zaide," "L'Oca del Cairo," and "Lo Sposo Deluso." For each of them he composed numbers so good that people try, again and again, to devise ways of bringing them to theatrical performance. Last year, we saw "Lo Sposo Deluso" filled out by Cimarosa's trivial setting of the same libretto; it was given by Juilliard students, in the Juilliard Theatre. This month, to the same theatre the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music brought a new version of "Zaide," devised by John Mortimer. Mozart abandoned "Zaide," his first German opera (after the early "Bastien und Bastienne"), when the commission for the opera seria "Idomeneo" arrived. He took the score with him to Vienna, where Joseph II had established a national company; looked it over; reported to his father that it was "very good, but not for Vienna, where they prefer comic pieces"; and composed instead "Die Entführung aus dem Serail," which has much the same plot (soprano and tenor, escaping from a seraglio, are recaptured, threatened with death, then forgiven and freed) but is enlivened by the characters of Blonde, Pedrillo, and Osmin. Fifteen musical numbers of "Zaide" survive, and only a few phrases of the spoken dialogue that should link them. The heroine's lovely "Ruhe sanft" is famous; her caged-nightingale aria is also beautiful; and in her G-minor "Tiger!" she adumbrates the accents of both Constanze and Pamina. Gomatz, the hero, has a remarkable melodrama—speech punctuated by music—finer than any before "Fidelio," and more various and extended. The last number Mozart wrote is a quartet in which Zaide and Gomatz face death together (she, like Constanze in "Die Entführung," more nobly than he); Allazim, the Sultan's overseer (a bass), who has joined the fugitives, pleads for mercy; and the Sultan (a tenor) is inflexible. Mozart's source was a "Serail" opera by Johann von Friebert, in which Zaide and Gomatz turn out to be brother and sister, and Allazim to be both their father and a man who once saved the Sultan's life. But after six numbers Mozart divagated from the source; the tender love music he

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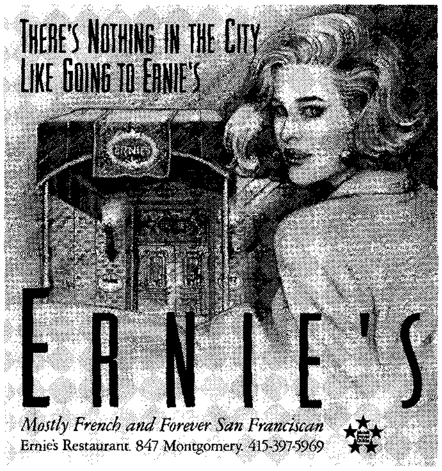

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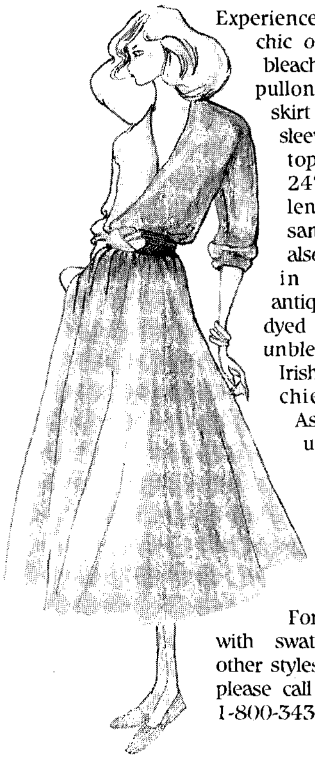

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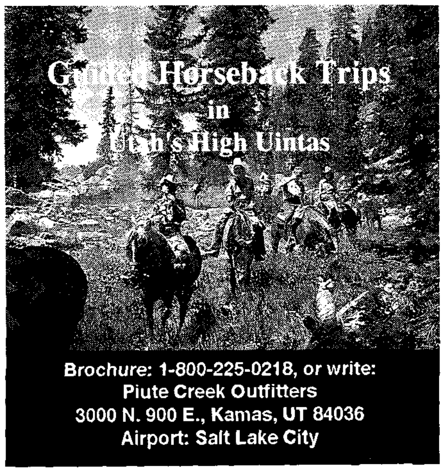

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wrote for Zaide and Gomatz suggests that he had a different dénouement in mind. (If not, psychobiographers had better get to work on his feelings about Nannerl.)

Italo Calvino produced a version of "Zaide" in which Mozart's numbers turn up in a trunk and the company tries out various ways of assembling and resolving them. Mortimer intercuts the musical numbers with a parallel drama set in the contemporary Middle East. The roles are doubled: Zaide, Gomatz, Allazim, and the Sultan are robed singers; the Girl, the Prisoner, the Politician, and the Leader are actors in modern dress who speak over a "soundscape," composed by Gerhard Samuel, of soft percussion. At the close, the Sultan accords the fugitives their freedom (Zaide sings a reprise of "Ruhe sanft") while on the other side of the stage the Leader has them executed: an opera may have a happy ending while "real life" is harsher. There is something a bit glib, almost opportunist, about this version, and its political dialogue is cliché-ridden. Mortimer's characters are cardboard; Mozart's live and breathe.

William Mann in his Mozart opera book ended an account of "Zaide" with:

> Attempts to turn this fragment into a viable theatrical musical experience cannot succeed. . . . The music of "Zaide" is of powerful interest to all Mozart students and the best use to be made of it is either by gramophone records or concert performance.

I have always enjoyed "Zaide" most in concert or on record but wonder whether a straightforward, simple reconstruction—begun by the "overture-symphony" K. 318, as Einstein suggested, and ended, perhaps, with an adaptation of the "Entführung" finale—would not succeed.

The Juilliard Theatre has a deceptively intimate appearance; it calls for strong projection. The Cincinnati vocal forces were modest (Marie Caruso, the Zaide, had pretty tone but weak words), and the melodrama speakers were conversational, not rhetorical enough for Mozart's impassioned music. Malcolm Fraser directed; Jindong Cai conducted.

In recent years, New York has done well by the comic Donizetti, with Vineyard productions of "Il Giovedì Grasso," "Gianni di Parigi," and "Betly," and, from other small companies, "Le Convenienze" and "Rita." This month, Mannes College gave the American première of "I Pazzi per Progetto," the one-act *farsa* that Donizetti composed in 1830, the year of "Anna Bolena." He composed it, one need hardly say, with grace and skill. The musical ear is captured. But the libretto, derived from Scribe's "Une Visite à Bedlam," is uncommonly feeble. The setting, a Paris lunatic asylum, makes one fear the worst. In fact the scene is confined to the office of the asylum director, and the characters only pretend, at times, to be mad. The vocal distribution is unusual: two sopranos, five basses (or baritones), no tenor. The score presents Donizetti at his most Rossinian; the heroine, who in 1830 was Luigia Boccabadati, begins her first mad scene with a strain from "Semiramide," and later the hero, seizing a viola, plays at her the aria "Ah, se è ver," which Boccabadati had introduced into Neapolitan performances of "Il Barbiere." Its words are relevant to the situation.

The Mannes show, given in the college's intimate little music room, would have been twice as enjoyable had the accompaniment been half as loud. Amy Kaiser, who was both the English translator and a spirited conductor, had not persuaded her band to listen alertly to the singers, to play with thin, light tone. When the seven woodwinds and five brasses rang out, one flinched, and there was some horrid intonation from the handful of strings. The little opera was overdirected (by Philip Burton), with non-stop movement, and was overdesigned (by Vanessa James and Mr. Burton)—deftly, inventively, but unsuitably. The singers were lively—Indira Mahajan, the heroine, had charm; Hyung-Il Moon, as Eustachio (an earlier Dulcamara), had big eloquent eyes; Dan Schreibman, in a small role, knew how to deliver recitative—but they were too much concerned with the mechanics of an elaborate, fancy enactment to come across as characters.

Donizetti, a master composer, was also one of the most lovable, generous, and honest of men. "I Pazzi per Progetto" may not be one of his best operas, but like all of them, tragic or humorous, it should tell us of his warm feelings for human beings as they live, laugh, and suffer in our strange old world.

—Andrew Porter

THE THEATRE

At the Dig

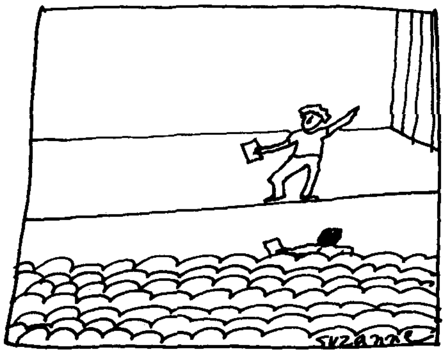
TO get it over with at once, John Guare's "Four Baboons Adoring the Sun," at the Vivian Beaumont, is a sad disappointment. Its heroine, Penny, has divorced her congressman husband to marry an archeologist, Philip, and they decide to invite the children from their former marriages to join them for a vacation at their dig in Sicily—to allow the children to escape, as they themselves have, from a stifling suburban life. At the opening, only the god Eros, all but unclad, is on the stage, where primitive statues of four baboons surround him and a fire burns in a pit at stage center. As Eros sings of love and lust, Penny and Philip enter to meet the flight from America, and the kids stream in, all nine of them. To start things off, each of the children is assigned a new name, lifted from mythology. Wayne, Philip's thirteen-year-old son, gets Icarus. When bedtime comes, he and Halcy, Penny's thirteen-year-old daughter, are discovered in their parents' bed, and announce that they have fallen in love. As episode follows episode, the children revolt against their parents at every turn, and Wayne, now more Icarus than Wayne, either leaps or falls to his death from a high cliff, leaving Halcy and his father stunned and heartbroken. But despite Mr. Guare's often witty and telling lines, and despite his provocative ideas about children's sexuality, his script scatters to the four winds, coming together only at the end, as Philip leaves with the body of his son and most of the children. Penny, in the glowing and exquisite performance of Stockard Channing, remains onstage with just two of them, and she is as rapturous as ever.

Even when Guare's plays don't work—and "Four Baboons" doesn't—they offer many treats. He can be remote and confusing but never a bore. Perhaps family life is just not his subject; and setting the script as far afield as Sicily and dressing it up with mythological trimmings doesn't help any. James Naughton's Philip, strong, humorous, and sensitive, is a worthy mate for Miss Channing's Penny; Wil Horneff and Angela Goethals are funny and touching as Wayne and Halcy; and the other children, whether naughty or proper, are lively company. Eugene Perry, a noble singer, is Eros. Sir Peter Hall's production, in Tony Walton's marvellous setting, lighted by Richard Pilbrow, has its thrilling moments. In short, we have everything here but a play. —EDITH OLIVER

Magical Opportunism

ARIEL DORFMAN'S "Death and the Maiden," which opened last week at the Brooks Atkinson in a production directed by Mike Nichols, is not the subtlest of plays. Set in the present, in "a country that is probably Chile," it concerns a woman's attempt to visit private justice on the man she holds responsible for torturing her in captivity fifteen years before. The woman (Glenn Close) may or may not be deluded in thinking that the man she hears dropping off her husband at their beach house at the beginning of the play and the doctor who used to listen to Schubert while experimenting on her with electric-shock therapy are one and the same. The man (Gene Hackman) may or may not have ulterior motives for returning several hours later and wangling an invitation to stay the night. The husband (Richard Dreyfuss), a human-rights lawyer who, ironically, has just been appointed to a commission investigating past atrocities, may or may not be merely humoring her in allowing her to put the man on trial. Certainly he is stunned the next morning to find his wife holding a gun on the poor fellow, after binding him to a chair and stuffing her dirty panties in his mouth.

What crimes, if any, justify punishment exacted according to private justice? Isn't it odd how violence brutalizes not only its victims but its authors? And where will it all end? The questions raised by "Death and the Maiden" have been oft before but ne'er so ploddingly explored. Not only does Mr. Dorfman take three long scenes to set up what he wants us to view as the central issue of his play—that Miss Close is doing to Mr. Hackman exactly what she accuses him and his ilk of having done to her—but he has Mr. Dreyfuss spell it out several times, long after we've made the connection ourselves, and long after we've ceased to care. Weeks later, it seems, Mr. Dreyfuss is still dwelling on the irony of the situation; and, in fact, Mr. Dorfman's play never gets much beyond that idea. To be sure, the play observes classical rules about unity of time and place, and about offstage violence (Glenn Close goes into the guest bedroom to conk Gene Hackman on the head), but the sententious way in which Mr. Dorfman approaches his Aeschylean theme seems exploitative in view of how little he has to say about it.



I haven't seen the production of "Death and the Maiden" that took London by storm last year, but I gather from people who have that what made it so effective was the performance of Juliet Stevenson in the central role. Knowing how she can seem to teeter ambiguously between madness and sanity, or between moral ascendancy and moral naïveté, I can imagine the tension Miss Stevenson would bring to a play even as flaccid as Mr. Dorfman's. With the brittle Miss Close in the role, there are no ambiguities, and her co-stars are grossly miscast. As so often with Mr. Nichols, it's a question of wrongheadedness when it comes to matters of style and context. He made a mockery of Beckett's anonymous tramps with his all-star "Waiting for Godot" and, before that, turned Tom Stoppard's "The Real Thing" into a substandard drawing-room comedy. This time, by calling on quintessentially American stars like Gene Hackman and Richard Dreyfuss to stand for extremes of Latin-American political repression, he renders meaningless what would have been merely obvious instead. —MIMI KRAMER

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

MARCH 19

THIS most mysterious, and potentially significant, election has racked up a number of surprises, and probably isn't finished with us yet. For all intents and purposes—and barring any further surprises—both parties have their nominees. The sitting President was never likely to be rejected by his own party, but he had to go through more than he cared to in order to rid himself of any real challenge and try to keep his base intact. The Democrats had designed a system to give them an early decision on their nominee—so as to start concentrating on the general election as early as possible—but what's happened isn't quite what they had in mind. In Bill Clinton they have a candidate who makes a great many of them nervous. Paul Tsongas's suspending his campaign today left them feeling denuded of an option, even though they knew that Tsongas hadn't done well enough to be much of an option. Jerry Brown they see as a nuisance, but one that could bring more harm to their already vulnerable front-runner. There is a dark cloud over Clinton's head that could break into a storm at any moment—and will keep Democrats nervous until Election Day. Among the mysteries of this election is whether the public is more ready to overlook peccadilloes than it is widely assumed to be.

Though both Bush and Clinton have vulnerabilities, a match-up between them would in all likelihood be a powerful one, characterized by a debate about the future direction of this country—a more serious debate than we have had for many elections. This has been, thus far, the most serious nominating contest in a long time, with the voters demanding substantive answers to questions about big issues. There have been fewer extraneous, or even frivolous, issues in this election than in recent ones.

Gahan Wilson

BEFORE Bush cut short his campaigning in the South last week to return to playing President (a better campaign strategy, several advisers had argued), it wasn't a pretty sight—the nation's Chief Executive out there floundering, obviously uncomfortable and unhappy. It had been envisioned for some time that his campaigning would be limited after this week's primaries, on the theory that Bush would have won sixteen primaries and Pat Buchanan would be old news. For whatever variety of reasons, Bush did better against Buchanan when he campaigned less.

As Bush campaigned against Buchanan, a lot of things came at him at once: he clearly considered it an indignity that he had to battle for a nomination that was rightly his and that he had assumed would be handed him with no difficulty, and for which he was now being challenged by a lowly commentator. Bush is known to feel that Buchanan is beneath him—a rather crude figure who has no place in Presidential politics. Bush was also known to be unhappy with his speeches and his scheduling—and when a candidate loses confidence in the people who are running his campaign it can shake him. Bush took badly to Buchanan's goading—his referring to him as "King George." A White House aide said to me not long ago, "The thinking is contested. That's why the message is so confused." Reflecting some of the tensions between the White House and the campaign (though at the top they are very congenial), he added, "The campaign, in its usual mechanical way, reacts like a campaign and sends the President out there without a message."

As the contests on March 10th (Super Tuesday) approached, Bush began to settle into the theme of "family, jobs, and peace." In Savannah, Georgia, he said, "America is first as long as we put the family first"—whatever that means. Buchanan was setting the agenda: the President went wherever Buchanan had put down his flag; he responded to Buchanan's challenge by taking actions to appease the right. He thereby gave satisfaction to Buchanan, and betrayed his own weakness. Bush's political advisers said that there was no choice but to have him chase Buchanan around the South—in order to hold down Buchanan's vote total and make certain that he didn't carry a single state. There was a real fear on the part of some Bush advisers that Buchanan would ride the quota and pornography issues to victory in Georgia on March 3rd. At that, Buchanan was able to amass more than a third (thirty-six per cent) of the vote in Georgia; in South Carolina, which the Republican governor, Carroll Campbell, and his machine had wired for Bush (as they did four years ago), the combination of Buchanan and David Duke won thirty-three per cent—less than a triumph for Bush. After New Hampshire, the President's advisers had said that Buchanan had benefitted from special circumstances there, and would be crushed in the South.

The most embarrassing thing Bush did was to say on the eve of the Georgia primary that breaking his 1988 no-new-taxes pledge in 1990 was the biggest mistake of his Presidency. He didn't suggest that it had been a mistake in policy, but that it had caused him too much "political grief." In fact, Bush's apologia seemed so pathetic that one had to worry about him: how deeply is this political challenge affecting him? It also raised the question of whether there is anything he will stand up for if he runs into difficulty. Bush said, "Any time you get hammered on something, I guess you want to redo it." This episode raised, in a painful fashion, the question of whether we have a President or a weathervane. One of the President's political advisers says that the possibility of Bush's disowning the agreement to raise taxes had been discussed with him for some time but that "nobody expected him to do it now"—in connection with a primary. In making his statement, the President put himself, and the country—if he's reëlected—back in a box on taxes.

On the road, the President changed his plans in Atlanta to attend a Presbyterian church and went to a conservative Baptist one instead. He renewed his support of prayer in schools (on which he'd been silent for some time), and, speaking before the National Association of Evangelicals, in Chicago, he reaffirmed his opposition to abortion. But Bush's political problems probably can't be solved by a few lurches to the right, and he may in fact have misinterpreted the vote that Buchanan was reaping, which seemed to be more of a protest against economic conditions and a registering of unhappiness with the political system than an expression of any desire that Bush turn more to the right. Moderate Republicans fear that Bush may be making it harder for himself to recapture the middle ground in the fall, but some of the President's political advisers aren't very interested in the middle ground. One said to me recently, speaking about the Buchanan challenge, "He's getting a protest vote. Those people will come back in the fall when we position Bush as a conservative and the Democrat as a liberal." Also, the Bush campaign's responses to the challenge were tactical: Let's appease the right with this; let's bash Congress. Bush gave no sense that he understood that the voters were hungry for—even desperate for—a feeling that he grasps their economic situation and worries, and has clear ideas about how to lead the country to a better future. By bearing gifts almost everywhere he went, Bush seemed to trivialize the people's economic concerns. He distributed government projects in New Hampshire and Florida, among other places, and changes in regulations affecting oil and gas producers (Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana) and automobile-pollution standards (Michigan). The automobile-pollution move was opposed by the oil-and-gas industry, but its states had already voted. The Bush Administration makes a practice of undoing regulations that friendly industries complain about.

Congress, of course, offers a tempting target. The latest scandal, involving overdrawn checking accounts at the House of Representatives' private bank, has been blown way out of proportion, but it couldn't have come at a worse time for the incumbents, and it's a convenient symbol for the charges that Congress is self-indulgent and out of touch. Though there were some abuses, not all transgressors were equally guilty, and nobody—not even the taxpayers—got hurt. The issue was flogged by Republicans hoping to embarrass many Democrats out of their seats, even though some Republicans were also involved. When three Cabinet members were netted in the scandal—with perhaps bigger fish to come—some of the partisan fun went out of the issue. But Congress isn't at the heart of the President's problems; it simply acts as a useful diversion. The President's problem is that he trained for years and years to be the Cold War President, and now that the Cold War is over he is at a loss for what to do.

The people might still reëlect Bush, but large numbers of them have figured out that he doesn't have a grasp of, or even much interest in, domestic policy. Last week, his approval ratings were at an all-time low (thirty-nine per cent in one poll, forty-five per cent in another). If the economy improves—as it is now giving some signs of doing—some of this anger will subside, but it would have to improve enough so that people noticed, and memories would have to be short. And this recession will prove not to have been temporary in several sectors. To-

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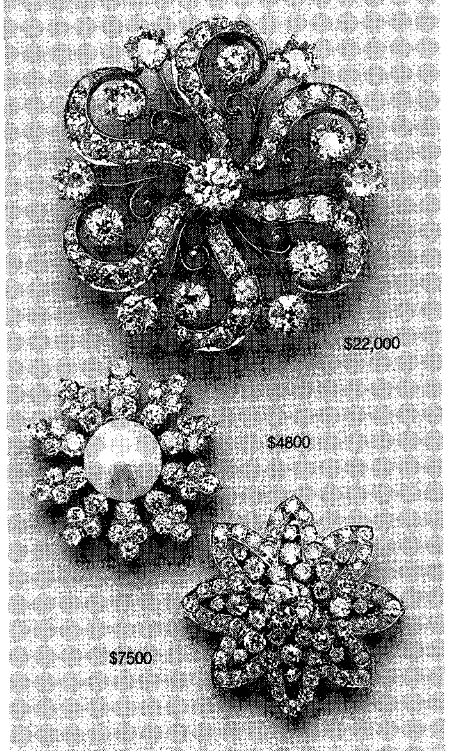

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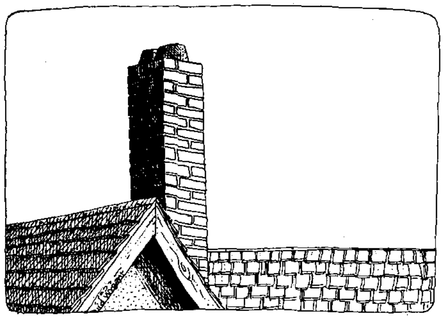
morrow, the twentieth of March, is the deadline the President set for congressional action on his economic program. Congress will probably meet the deadline—just—but, as anyone could have predicted, it rejected the President's program and adopted one of its own, which gives the middle class a tax break and raises taxes on the wealthiest. Democratic leaders in both houses knew that the tax cut wouldn't do anything to improve the economy, and were certain the President would veto it, but they found the politics of it irresistible. The President's advisers have been anticipating the deadline, and held planning sessions on what to do then as if it were D Day. To some Bush people, how it was handled was seen as key to the general election. One of the President's top political advisers said to me recently, "The biggest battle we have that affects the general election is the battle with the Congress on the economy—and how it's seen as ending." For all the buildup—and after much internal wrangling—the final plan for the President's action tomorrow was fairly thin (the same thing happened with his State of the Union address): a speech to Republican lawmakers and a demand that Congress rescind spending for certain government projects. A Bush adviser told me that after tomorrow a new effort would be made to have the President define what he wants to do in the future.

Meanwhile, Buchanan ran a pugnacious, relentless campaign against Bush and, for the benefit of his Southern audiences, played on racial tensions and homophobia. The greatest service he did was relegate David Duke's campaign to obscurity, making a onetime menace a footnote. Buchanan bridled at suggestions that he had adopted Duke's platform of racism and anti-Semitism, but he was ambiguous in his stated attitude toward him.

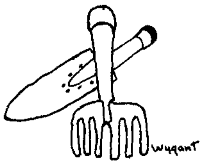
As the primaries ground on, and Bush's people felt that it had been established that Buchanan wouldn't win a state—and hoped that the press would grow bored with the Buchanan story—they sent various messages over the wall that Buchanan ought to consider getting out of the race. Some of the suggesters, hoping to be future conservative leaders, had their own agendas. Buchanan argued, not without reason, that his campaign was pushing the Bush Administration in his direction. But he did lower his tone as the Midwestern primaries approached, saying that he would stay in the race, but more as a movement than as an attempt to defeat Bush. Buchanan's diminished showing in those states (twenty-two per cent in Illinois and twenty-five in Michigan) led him to in effect cede the nomination to Bush. (The Bush team especially hurt him in Michigan with an ad pointing out that this "America First" protectionist drives a Mercedes.) Besides, the longer Buchanan stays in the race the more time he has to build up his own mailing list for funding his ongoing movement.

THE growing possibility, following Bill Clinton's sweep of the Southern states on Super Tuesday, that he had enough "momentum" going into Illinois and Michigan this week to win there, and would be the nominee, produced a very unusual atmosphere here. Most Democrats, in and out of Congress, remained quite tense over the possibility, which they considered very strong, that some new scandal would burst around Clinton, before or after he received the nomination. It was as if the Party were about to nominate an exploding cigar. Conversations here run to unfinished sentences—as in "Clinton could give Bush a run for it, unless . . ." or "Clinton could do well on the economic issue, until . . ." The cliché/joke of the election season became "When the next high heel drops." Every day, there are rumors that this or that publication is about to publish a story that will embarrass Clinton or might even blow up his campaign. Everyone assumes that there are more embarrassing stories to come—even the Clinton people do. But, even without a new story, a lot of Democratic politicians think that what is already known about Clinton will doom him. No one doubts that in the fall campaign the Republicans will use the sex issue, even if the President remains above it (as he largely did in the instance of Willie Horton). After all, in 1988, without a shred of evidence, the Republicans got it into the mainstream press that Kitty Dukakis had burned a flag and that Michael Dukakis had received psychiatric treatment. Though they aren't supposed to be caught talking about it, the Bush campaign advisers relish the idea of campaigning against Clinton. Sex is only one of three "character" issues that would be raised against him: the others would be draft evasion and recent stories that Clinton and his wife, Hillary, were involved in a questionable land deal in Arkansas with a friend who was later majority owner of a failed S. & L., which was represented before state regulators by Hillary Clinton's law firm, with Mrs. Clinton playing a direct part at least at one point. The story is a bit murky, but there remain some legitimate questions.



It isn't assumed here that any old sex allegation involving Clinton would automatically finish off his campaign, and, in fact, people have become connoisseurs of the various types of allegations that might come along. One that key Democrats dread most is any piece of real evidence that Gennifer Flowers was more than, as Clinton put it, "a friendly acquaintance." Since he flatly denied that he had had a sexual relationship with Flowers, these Democrats refer to such a possibility as "the sword"—as in the sword hanging over the Party. Another dangerous possibility, one key Democrat said, was a disclosure that suggested "pattern." And many Democrats believe that if the election is close even a very few points denied Clinton because of the character issues could cost them the election.

It was only a matter of time before Tsongas and Brown started taking on Clinton on the character issue. In the early days, Tsongas had been elegant on the issue, saying in debates that he was sure that every one of the Democrats had more character than George Bush, who kept changing his position on various matters, but as Tsongas got more desperate before Illinois and Michigan he said, "Whatever vulnerabilities I have on the issues, they're not vulnerabilities of character and judgment." Brown had unabashedly been coming at Clinton directly for a while, but never so directly—and misleadingly—as in the last debate in Chicago, on Sunday night, where he brought up the matter of Hillary Clinton's law practice. Brown (who has taken to referring to Clinton as the "scandal a week" candidate) misrepresented a Washington *Post* story of that morning describing her law firm's role in Arkansas, and said the story said that Clinton was "funnelling money to his wife's law firm" and that the firm was representing clients before state agencies. Clinton, prepared for such an attack, did a "How dare you" routine that was as effective as it was obvious. Brown understood that the press would go for the fireworks, so their bitter exchange was replayed many times, and was raised by the press the next day. Hillary Clinton, a whip-smart woman, made one mistake the next day (saying, "I suppose I could have stayed home and baked cookies and had teas . . ."), but she soon recovered. She also said that she accepts no portion of the fees the firm earns through its business with the state. The usually controlled Hillary Clinton, confessing to confusion, is running into the same problem that Marilyn Quayle, also a lawyer, had to face, but there is no doubt that if the Clintons win—and this is very much a team effort—Hillary Clinton will be a very powerful presence.



There are a lot of possible steps between the surfacing of some new allegation and the end of Clinton's candidacy. Clinton has shown that he won't just go away. He and his people can be expected to fight back against any specific charges or disclosures, and, in fact, argue that it's a plus that they've already had the opportunity to hone techniques for doing so. They now aggressively try to smother rumors—find them out and put an end to them as quickly as possible. Even before Super Tuesday, they began giving serious thought to how to combat more broadly the character issue, and particularly the sex issue, in the general election. The most important element, a Clinton adviser told me, was to get back to discussing Clinton's issues: he had done well early in the campaign, before anyone voted, by presenting himself to the press and the public—largely to the press—as the thoughtful candidate, a man of ideas. A second purpose of this return to the issues-oriented candidacy was to try to recapture independents and suburbanites whom Clinton needs in November and who were the first to abandon him when his message was drowned out by scandal, and by his moving to the left to fight Tsongas. The campaign wants to reëstablish that Clinton is a very smart man who has been long and deeply engaged in the conversation within the Democratic Party over ideas. (But he should resist reciting his interminable lists to show how much he knows.) Another goal is to establish that Clinton is a man of convictions; this could be difficult. The "Slick Willie" appellation, which he hates, stems from a history of sliding around on a number of issues; his friends say that this stems less from deviousness than from a desire to please everyone. In any event, the result is the same. Clinton's speech last week in Macomb County, Michigan—a Detroit suburb made up of working-class whites who used to vote Democratic and then became "Reagan Democrats"—in which he said that the country had to come together across racial lines, and then a similar speech to a black audience in a Baptist church in Detroit were also a start in the general-election effort. The idea was to appeal not only to blacks and working-class whites but also to the affluent liberals and independents Clinton needs in the general election—and who the Clinton people felt would be attracted by a message of racial unity. The campaign will now try harder to establish Clinton as someone who has struggled long and hard to improve people's lives—and to get people to think more about that, and less about Gennifer Flowers and draft avoidance, when they hear his name.

The Clinton campaign has also begun to take some steps that it hopes will lead any more charges that are made about his personal life to backfire. It is encouraging blacks, who have been strong supporters of Clinton, in the belief that people are heaping things on Clinton because he's a good guy and he may be good for blacks. A Clinton adviser says, "The black community has become protective." The hope was that as it became apparent that Clinton would be the nominee other Democrats would feel the same way, and the Democratic base would consolidate around him. As for the possible impact on November, the adviser says, "It will depend on how urgent people are for change. If you can present these

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issues as preventing change, you can create a backlash." In the debate in Chicago on Sunday night, Clinton said that he always gets attacked in his campaigns, because he's a "change-agent."

Clinton believes that if people can just get a direct look at him, and hear his story, the other problems will go away. He is a salesman, and if he could go door to door so much the better. (His late father, whom he never knew, was a travelling salesman.) On the night of Super Tuesday, he said, "The people of the South heard the worst about me, but they saw the best." The strong Georgia victory—Clinton's first—was a very important one, a Clinton adviser says, because it validated voting for Clinton. Each time Clinton has won big, he has jumped in the polls in the next states. He was helped in the Midwest by his sweep of the Southern states on Super Tuesday—he didn't have any real opposition there, except for Tsongas in Florida, but Tsongas's chances were highly overrated. There were, however, some danger signals for Clinton in the exit polls in Georgia and on Super Tuesday as well. A significant number of Democratic voters said that the draft controversy had caused them difficulty, and Clinton did fairly badly among Democratic voters who said they seek in a candidate courage and an upholding of family values. Similarly, despite Clinton's overwhelming victories in Illinois and Michigan, exit polls indicated deep misgivings about him among Democrats who had voted for him.

Another factor in withstanding further allegations, an adviser said, is Clinton's having been the (self-designated) "Comeback Kid" in New Hampshire—his having fought back. After that, the adviser said, when the charges come at him "they become an arena for showing that he is a fighter." Clinton's tremendous resilience, his almost superhuman energy as a campaigner—in contrast with Tsongas, who took it much easier (and thereby raised questions about his health)—work very much in his favor. The current mythology notwithstanding, he did falter for a few days in New Hampshire and indulge his inclination to blame others for his troubles, but then, urged on by key advisers, got back on his feet. Many voters obviously find him charming and charismatic, while others find him too smooth. He is a superb campaigner in the conventional sense—hearty, energetic, and seemingly very sincere—though in being so good at it he raises questions about his genuineness. Every politician is calculating, but in Clinton's case the calculation is sometimes too apparent. On the other hand, he *is* a smart man, with as good a grasp of contemporary domestic issues as we're likely to see this year, and his energy suggests a Presidency that would be far from passive. (His foreign-policy credentials remain to be proven, but so, in a way, do Bush's.) We have become so used to the sight of embattled politicians cringing, going into a form of withdrawal, engaging in self-pity that when people see a rebounding, ebullient figure under fire they tend to think his problems must not be so bad, and admire his grit. Clinton's method of handling the charges has been a deliberate part of the process of trying to shrink them in importance: the Clinton campaign's approach to how its candidate should deal with the personal charges has been,

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according to an adviser, "lean into the press, never look defensive, and never personally describe the charges as unfair." Clinton now also takes the "nobody's perfect" approach, saying that the true test of character is whether you confront your problems, deal with them, and move on. He says, as good-naturedly as he can, "I've been called everything but a blue goose."

Clinton's political formula has changed from what it was supposed to be in one important respect: he has become less the centrist candidate, the embodiment of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council, less the outsider, and more the traditional Democrat, more of a liberal than he had set out to be and more the candidate of the Party establishment, which was decked out behind him on the platforms in various states. (He has a large number of "inside the Beltway" supporters as well.) This ideological shift underlines the question of who Clinton really is, but it was seen by his campaign as a matter of necessity when his survival as a candidate was at stake after New Hampshire, and Tsongas was his major rival. The campaign was exhausted and uncertain at first after the New Hampshire struggle, and Clinton's subsequent losses in South Dakota and Colorado were, an adviser says, "a wakeup call." Clinton and his strategists had expected his main opponent to be someone to the left of him, but then Mario Cuomo said he wouldn't run, and others who might have been painted as to his left—Bob Kerrey and Tom Harkin—showed little strength. Clinton went from the center to the left to get at Tsongas, who was more pro-business than Clinton, and was seen by New Hampshire voters as more conservative. The problem for Clinton—and he understands it as such—is that his centrist strategy was also designed for the general election. Now he has to retrieve it—if the Republicans will let him. Bill and Hillary Clinton were said to be unhappy in both political and social terms with the fact that he had lost the support of the upscale, more educated voters—that people like them and their friends were supporting Tsongas.

In moving left, Clinton became less the cool new man of ideas, and more the old-fashioned populist—arguing that his program was for "people," while Tsongas's was for "capital." (Clinton had also started out as more of a pro-business Democrat than the usual candidate has been.) He spent a lot less time talking about his theme of "responsibility" and his "New Covenant"—what people have to do in return for federal help—than was to be expected from his pre-primary rhetoric. His advisers say that New Hampshirites were too focussed on the near-depression in their state to want to hear about responsibility, and from then on it was a matter of getting his candidacy off the floor. Clinton has put together a coalition of blacks and working-class and middle-class whites. He is quite conscious of the fact, aides say, that he might be the first Democrat since Robert Kennedy to do this successfully. But he will have to broaden this coalition if he is to win the general election. Going back to talk of "New Covenants" won't be enough—that theme never sang anyway. The Clinton campaign plans to sharpen the candidate's message, stressing the themes of economic change and national unity—that the eighties are over. The idea is to put Bush on

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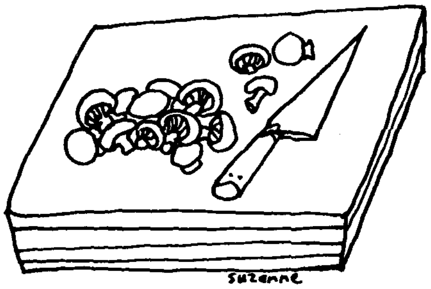
the defensive as the most effective practitioner of "wedge politics"—dividing group against group over such issues as race and patriotism—and also suggest that it's time for a generational change. Clinton's economic program, an adviser says, assumed that the recession would end, so he has talked all along not only about immediate steps to end the recession but also actions to halt this country's long-term economic decline—and will continue to press Bush on this. He and his advisers expect Bush to help him win the vote of liberals and to reach independents and suburbanites through his anti-environment moves and his anti-abortion statements. To reach these voters, Clinton will now stress his pro-choice position and his calls for racial harmony.

Despite these tactical shifts, Clinton has run the most longsighted campaign. Determined not to make the same mistake that Al Gore did four years ago, when he carried five Southern and border states on Super Tuesday but stalled in the Northern states that followed, Clinton had done early work in Illinois, recruiting his campaign manager, David Wilhelm, from the camp of Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley. Wilhelm, in turn, recruited other Chicago pols, and worked to make alliances with downstate—that is, nearly Southern—districts. In 1976, Jimmy Carter used a victory in Illinois to show his Northern stuff. Actually, the Clinton campaign is modelled on Carter's '76 campaign to a greater extent than most people realize.

TSONGAS wasn't ready for a large-scale battle—in terms of his organization, his mental preparedness, or the development of his message and his political skills. He had the requisite organization and the perfect message for New Hampshire—hard solutions for hard times—but the message seemed a little dour elsewhere, and he had to scramble. He let some opportunities elude him: he let Brown sneak up on him in Maine (which Brown has now won); he won Maryland on March 3rd but should have been able to win Colorado as well. Instead, he let it slip to Brown, who, along with Tsongas's other rivals, went after him for advocating nuclear power plants (he advocates keeping nuclear power as an option) and an increase in the gasoline tax. Tsongas's top advisers pleaded with him to give his message a lift by pointing out the goal of his proposals—well-paid jobs for skilled workers, long-term prosperity, and a competitive America—but he rarely did it. He liked saying that he was giving people "the hard truth," and "I'm not Santa Claus."

Actually, Tsongas wasn't proposing so many hard things. That they were considered so hard is testimony to the state of our politics. He of course opposed the middle-class tax cut as no solution to the recession and as no cure for our lagging competitiveness, and he was for a broader capital gains tax cut than Clinton is. There really wasn't all that much difference between what Tsongas and Clinton were proposing (Clinton has a long list of tax breaks), but there were enough differences in substance, and in rhetorical tone, to give Clinton an opening—which he eagerly and energetically seized.

Clinton was able to take Tsongas's strongest point—his economic message—and turn it against him. He hammered away that Tsongas was preaching the trickle-down economics of the eighties. Throughout the South and the Midwestern states, Clinton argued—even bellowed—that Tsongas wants to put "growth first, fairness later. Bull! We never had growth without fairness and we never will." He got applause when he said that Franklin Roosevelt "didn't get this country off its back by saying 'The only thing we have to fear is a lack of venture capital.' " Clinton's going after Tsongas for proposing an increase in the gasoline tax and for suggesting the consideration of cuts in entitlement programs (in particular, Social Security and Medicare)—and the apparent payoff of these attacks—shows that the time hasn't yet arrived when a political candidate can safely talk about these things. In Florida, Clinton, like a traditional Democratic candidate, pounded on them, and also suggested, unfairly, that a vote Tsongas cast when he was in the Senate meant that he was soft in his support for Israel.



Clinton simply out-campaigned Tsongas in the South and the Midwest: Tsongas was somewhat passive. He didn't figure out a way to popularize his economic message. He had popularized the idea that he was the candidate telling the truth, and early on he had profited from people's thinking that he was the candidate of ideas (even if they were hazy about what those ideas were—until his opponents gave flesh to them), that he was different, the anti-politician in an age of great skepticism about politicians. But in posing as the anti-politician he circumscribed himself, and when he did do something overtly political—such as tell a Texas audience he favored more tax breaks for oil and gas producers—he opened himself wide to a Clinton attack. In general, it pays to be wary of a politician who insists he isn't a politician. Tsongas seemed to be whining about Clinton's attacks—even though he made some strong ones of his own—and didn't know how to handle them, saying that if he responded he'd be "off my message." This had a certain poignancy, because it was one of the reasons Dukakis hadn't responded to the Bush campaign's attacks—and Tsongas was determined to prove, as he frequently said, that "I am one Greek who fights back." The gifted politician turns an attack back on his opponent by working into it his own message. (Anyway, politicians shouldn't talk about their "message"—just deliver it.) Tsongas's wandering around with a stuffed bear and calling it Pander Bear, after Clinton, lacked dignity, and seemed like more whining. Like Bob Kerrey (who took on Clinton on the draft issue), Tsongas began to say that he was the more electable candidate. He ran three negative ads, all questioning Clinton's character, in Illinois and Michigan. The more he did this, the less attractive and different a candidate he became.

All along, Tsongas had a limited constituency—the better-educated, upscale voter—which reflected the limitedness of his message. It's not a constituency one can govern with—even if one could win the nomination with it. He argued that he would be able to win independents and moderate Republicans in the general election, but this was a *political* argument, not a substantive one, and not a compelling reason for Democrats to vote for him in the primaries. Tsongas never should have let Jerry Brown make off with the anti-establishment and political-reform issues. Tsongas the righteous got under Clinton's skin—as Clinton showed in some of the debates. Prolonged exposure didn't seem to help Tsongas with the public. His talk of his illness as an inspiration behind his candidacy made voters uncomfortable. In the end, Tsongas ran out of money. He was unwilling to borrow in order to have the huge amounts necessary to advertise for the New York primary, on April 7th, and he was staring at a string of defeats. Even Connecticut, which votes next Tuesday and which Tsongas had said it was very important for him to win, looked shaky. (Last night, polls showed Clinton ahead.) He suspended rather than withdraw, so that his delegates could go to the Convention. He left with dignity and class and, like most candidates, with his own interpretation of history. Perhaps with an eye to Brown, he said that the alternative was "to play the role of spoiler." He said, "I did not survive my ordeals in order to be the agent of the reëlection of George Bush."

Jerry Brown's emergence as more than simply a gadfly in the early debates was in part a result of his own cleverness, and in part a default by the other candidates. For all his talk about having worked with Mother Teresa and his disgust with the political system, Brown has shown in this campaign that he is an accomplished opportunist. His concern with the way money corrupts politics is of recent vintage; as Party chairman in California, a post he held until last year, he opposed limits on contributions. Zelig-like, he adapts to the scene of the moment, costume and all. In Maine, it was L. L. Bean flannel shirts, and on the night of Super Tuesday there he was in Romulus, Michigan, wearing a blue U.A.W. jacket. Brown picked up some labor support that had been behind Harkin, who pulled out of the race last week. (Harkin's problem was that his old-fashioned liberalism didn't seem to speak to today's economic problems, his prairie-populist style didn't reach today's urban and suburban populace, and he came off as simply too mean.) Clinton and Tsongas had disadvantages with labor—Clinton because he comes from a right-to-work state and Tsongas because of his pro-business approach. Brown's coming in second in Michigan was a big blow to Tsongas's candidacy. (Tsongas was second in Illinois but far behind Clinton, as Brown was in Michigan.)

Though Brown is always on the left, he manages to find a particular niche in each contest. His message about the corruption of the political system had always seemed like a potentially powerful one—especially this year—and he has found a less grating way of delivering it. He also added to his repertoire a flat tax (which is regressive), a strong environmental position, and, of late, a championing of labor's positions—especially its opposition to a new trade agreement with Mexico that, labor argues, could lead to the export of more jobs. (Brown used to be a free trader.) Brown's combined program has enabled him to put together a coalition of younger voters, Greens, New Agers, and the white elements of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition and some labor.

As the campaign progressed, Brown began to point out that he had twice been governor of the most populous state in the union, with an economy equivalent to the eighth largest in the world. He's shown that he's a stubborn fighter, and there's reason to expect him to hang in through the California primary, in June, and perhaps cause the Party some problems. Brown, a man of independent means, has nothing else to do. He runs his campaign on a shoestring, and spontaneously. He has long refused to obey the rules of political life, and is undisciplined, and lives by his wits. His scoffing at convention is now accompanied by an unfortunate sneer. He is said to feel that he should have become President years ago (he ran in 1976 and 1980), but that the élites failed to gather around his candidacy. Last year, Brown started to run for the Senate but suddenly changed his mind and ran for President instead.

Bob Kerrey's pulling out of the race after the March 3rd contests was ordained by reality. He won none of the contests, and picked up no delegates, on that day, and he was out of money. Money is a brutal determinant in these campaigns, and it tends to follow victors. A lot of Democrats felt they had a stake in keeping Kerrey's candidacy alive, since they saw him as an acceptable alternative to Clinton

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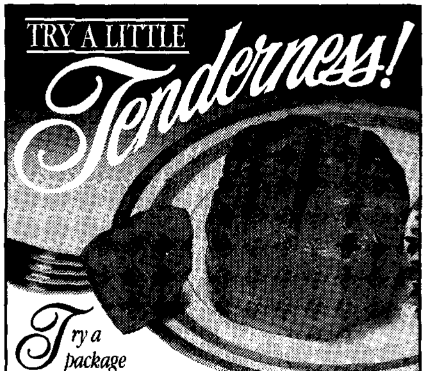

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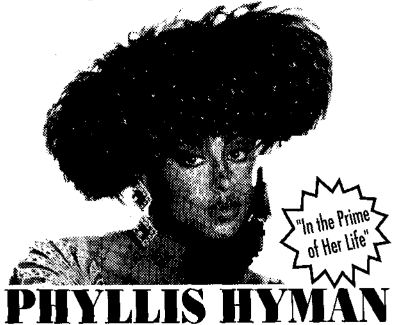

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and Tsongas. They were anxious that there be a third man in the race and, after March 3rd, as if in a bad dream, learned that their third man was Jerry Brown. Kerrey's candidacy might have been more successful if he had started earlier; he had, in fact, become a good candidate toward the end, when it was too late. But there is something very unconventional in Kerrey, which was both part of his appeal and a hindrance, and might have kept him from being a successful candidate in any event. He was possibly the most candid contestant in a long time. Asked on CNN whether he hadn't been uncomfortable to begin with, he replied, "I was terrible to begin with. I wasn't just uncomfortable." Kerrey's candidacy also raised the issue of Vietnam—in an unexpected way. The issue of Clinton's escaping service seemed to stir up in Kerrey a long-buried bitterness. And he encountered in some voters antipathy toward someone who had served in Vietnam. Kerrey said to me recently, alluding to Tsongas, that he didn't have the freedom to say his own equivalent of "my Peace Corps experience taught me this." Referring to the non-welcome the returning Vietnam veterans received, he said, "The unwelcome came back to me as a consequence of being reminded that people didn't want to talk about it." Toward the end in New Hampshire, he said, "I had to ask my introducers to not lead with my Medal of Honor but with the fact that I was a businessman, or a governor. Despite the round of applause I'd get when my Medal of Honor was mentioned, people were bothered by it."

A DEMOCRATIC senator I have been in touch with throughout the primaries said to me last week (before the voting in Illinois and Michigan), "I'm more depressed than ever." He continued, "The feeling of dread is everywhere—all around the country." He said that there is still a lot of talk about Lloyd Bentsen's entering the race, or inheriting the nomination after the primaries—if and when the Clinton candidacy collapses. He also said that Bentsen is willing. Even some politicians who had endorsed Clinton were apprehensive. Another Democratic senator said to me last week, "There's a tremendous amount of skepticism about Clinton's candidacy, and a very significant concern about what scenarios might occur and what effect they might have on incumbents and for the Presidency. The worst nightmare is that something occurs in October." This senator said there was much talk of "the parachute candidacy"—someone who descends upon the Convention and becomes the choice of the Party. The senator added that this could happen only if Clinton were far more wounded by then than he is now. He also said there was a growing belief that the parachute candidate would have to be someone from outside Washington—Ross Perot's name comes up in this connection—but that Lloyd Bentsen is also a favorite. (Perot has ideas about running as an independent.)

This week, following the voting in Illinois and Michigan, members of Congress were still worried about what might happen to Clinton if he is the nominee—"Everybody's holding his breath," a Democratic senator said. Tsongas's withdrawal only heightened the tension, but members of Congress were more concerned—obsessed, really—with the matter of the bounced checks. Many senators had served in the House, and the problem was all the more vexing because—as a frustrated Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney pointed out on Tuesday—the information the bank gave the members was so haphazard that many didn't know that they were overdrawing. The story was something like the Black Plague—nobody knew where it would strike next.

WITH Bush and Clinton assured of the nomination—this is, at least, as certain as anything has been this year—both will now focus more on the general election. But Clinton will have to continue to campaign actively—the memory of Jerry Brown's late entry in 1976, when he beat Jimmy Carter in a string of primaries, burns in the minds of Clinton's campaign people—and they see this as an opportunity to get their candidate better known and defined. Both Bush and Clinton will have won their nominations despite a lot of hesitancy on the part of the voters. Clinton's will have been the result of accidents as well as his own talents. His triumph was over a weak field. Bush has lost the confidence of the majority of the American people. Both have a lot of work to do.

—ELIZABETH DREW

REFLECTIONS

ALFRED CHESTER'S WIG

THE other day, I received in the mail a card announcing the retirement of an old friend—not an intimate but an editor with whom, over the years, I have occasionally been entangled, sometimes in rapport, sometimes in antagonism. The news that a man almost exactly my contemporary could be considered ready to retire struck me as one more disconcerting symptom of a progressive unreality. I say "one more" because there have been so many others. Passing my reflection in a shopwindow, for instance, I am taken by surprise at the sight of a striding woman with white hair: she is still wearing the bangs of her late youth, but there are shocking pockets and trenches in her face; she has a preposterous dewlap; she is no one I can recognize. Or I am struck by a generational pang: the discovery that the most able and arresting intellects currently engaging my attention were little children when I was first possessed by the passions of mind they have brilliantly mastered.

All the same, whatever assertively supplanting waves may lap around me—signals of redundancy, or of superannuation—I know I am held fast. Or, rather, it is not so much a fixity of self as it is of certain exactnesses, neither lost nor forgotten: a phrase, a scene, a voice, a moment. These exactnesses do not count as memory, and even more surely escape the net of nostalgia or memoir. They are platonic enclosures, or islands, independent of time, though not of place; in short, they irrevocably *are*. Nothing can snuff them. They are not like candle flames, liable to waver or sputter, and not like windows or looking glasses, which streak or cloud. They have the quality of clear photographs, or of stone friezes, or of the living eyes in ancient portraits. They are not subject to erasure or dimming.

Upon one of these impermeable platonic islands, the image of Alfred Chester stands firm. It is likely that this name—Alfred Chester—is no longer resonant in literary circles. As it happens, the editor who is now retiring was an early publisher of Chester. And Chester had his heyday. He knew Truman Capote, or said he did, and Susan Sontag and Paul Bowles and Princess Marguerite Caetani, the legendary aristocrat who sponsored a magazine called *Botteghe Oscure*. He wrote energetically snotty reviews that swaggered and intimidated—the kind of reviews that many young men (and very few young women) in the fifties and sixties wrote, in order to found a reputation. But his real calling was for fiction, and anyhow it was a time when reputations were sought mainly through the writing of stories and novels.

There is, by the way, another reason these reflections cannot be shrugged off as simply a "memoir," that souvenir elevation of trifles. A memoir, even at its best, is a recollection of what once was; distance and old-fashionedness are taken for granted. But who and what Chester was, long ago, and who and what I was have neither vanished nor grown quaint. Every new half decade sprouts a fresh harvesting of literary writers, equally soaked in the lust of ambition, equally sickened (or galvanized) by envy. There is something natural in all this—something of nature, that is. The snows of yesteryear may be the nostalgic confetti of memoir, but last year's writers are routinely replaced by this year's; the baby carriages are brimming over with poets and novelists. Chester, though, has the sorrowful advantage of being irreplaceable, not so much because of his portion of genius (he may not, when all is said and done, deserve this term) as because he was cut down in the middle of the trajectory of his literary growth, so there is no suitable measure, really, by which to judge what he might have been in full maturity. He never came to fruition. He died young.

Or relatively young. He was forty-two. Well, Keats was twenty-five, Kafka forty, and, in truth, we are satisfied: no one feels a need for more Keats or more Kafka. What is there is prodigy enough. It might be argued that Chester had plenty of time to achieve his masterpieces, if he was going to achieve them at all—and yet, with Chester, it is difficult to agree. He rarely sat still. Time ran away with

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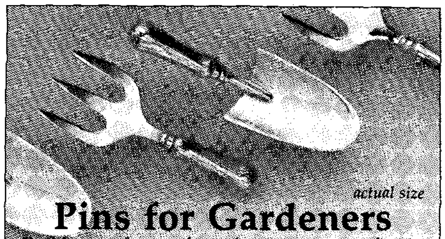

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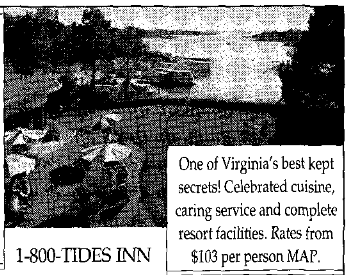

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him—hauled him from America to Europe to North Africa, and muddled him, and got in his way. His dogs—repulsive wild things he kept as pets—got in his way. His impatient and exotic loves got in his way. His fears and imaginings got in his way. Finally—the most dangerous condition for any writer—it was the desolation of life itself that got in his way: moral anguish, illness, aimless and helpless wanting, relentless loneliness, decline.

All this I know from the hearsay of a small accumulation of letters and essays and other testimony by witnesses to his latter-day bitterness, and the suffering it led to. By then, Chester and I had long been estranged—or merely, on my part, out of touch. I am as certain as I can be of anything that I was never in Chester's mind in the last decade of his life; but he was always in mine. He was a figure, a presence, a regret, a light, an ache. And no matter how remote he became, geographically or psychologically, he always retained the power to wound. He wounded me when he was in Paris. He wounded me when, in 1970, we were both in Jerusalem. And once—much, much earlier—in an epistolary discussion of what we both termed "the nature of love," I wounded him terribly: so terribly that after those letters were irretrievably written, and read, and answered, our friendship deteriorated. Paris, Tangier, Jerusalem: he lived in all these fabled cities, but I knew him only in New York. I knew him only at—so to speak—the beginning. "In my beginning is my end" was not true for Chester; and, having been there at the beginning, I am convinced that he was intended for an end utterly unlike the one he had. I have always believed this—that his life as he was driven to conduct it was a distortion, not a destiny. At one time, I even believed that if Chester and I had not been so severely separated I might have persuaded him (how he would have scoffed at such arrogance) away from what was never, in my view, inevitable.

Unless you count the wig. Chester was the wig's guardian. He was fanatically careful of it in the rain: he wore a rain hat if rain was expected, or, if it was not, covered his head with his coat. He was also the wig's prisoner and puppet; it gave him the life he had, and perhaps the life he eventually chose.

So it is possible, even likely, that I am wrong in my belief—a conviction four decades old—that Chester was not meant to die drugged, drunken, desolate, in the company of a pair of famished wild dogs. It may be—if you count the wig as the beginning—that his end *was* in his beginning. It may be that that curly orange-yellow wig he so meticulously kept from being rained on determined Chester's solitary death.

Most people called him Al and, later, Alfred. As far as I can tell, except for Mr. Emerson I am the only one who ever called him Chester, and, of course, I still call him that. Chester has a casual and natural sound to it, and not merely because it can pass as a given name. I go on saying Chester because that is how I first heard him referred to. Mr. Emerson regularly said Chester. Me he called, according to the manners of the time, Miss. Yet it was not quite the manners of the time; it was a parody of the time before our time. Sarcasm and parody and a kind of thrillingly sardonic spite were what Mr. Emerson specialized in. Mr. Emerson's own first name was not accessible to us; if it was, I cannot recollect it. Like Chester in Jerusalem a quarter of a century on, Mr. Emerson either was or was not a suicide. In the summer following our semester with him, the story went, Mr. Emerson stepped into a wood and shot himself. The wood, the shotgun, the acid torque of Mr. Emerson's mouth at the moment of extinction—they all scattered into chill drops of conjecture, drowned in the roil of the thousands of ex-soldiers who were flooding New York University that year. The only thing verifiable in the rumor of Mr. Emerson's suicide was the certainty of his absence: in the fall, he was gone.

Mr. Emerson's class was Freshman Composition, and it was in this class, in 1946, that Chester and I first met. We were starting college immediately after the war—the Second World War, which my generation, despite Korea and Vietnam, will always call, plainly and unqualifiedly, "the war." The G.I. Bill was in full steam, and Washington Square College—the downtown liberal-arts branch of N.Y.U., and rumored to be a former factory building—had reverted to assembly-line procedures for the returning swarms of serious men still in Army jackets and boots, many of them New Yorkers but many of them not: diffident Midwesterners with names like Vernon and Wendell, wretchedly quartered in Quonset huts on Long Island together with old-fashioned wives and quantities of babies. To the local teen-agers just out of high school they seemed unimpassioned and literal-minded—grave, patient, humorless old men. Some of them actually *were* old: twenty-seven, thirty-two, even thirty-five. The government, in a historic act of public gratitude, was footing the bill for the higher education of veterans; the veterans, for their part, were intent on getting through. They were nothing if not pragmatic. They wanted to know what poetry and history were *for*.

The truth is, I despised these anxious grownups, in their seasoned khaki, with their sticky domestic worries and ugly practical needs. I felt them to be intruders, or obstacles, or something worse: contaminants. Their massive presence was an affront to literature, to the classical vision, to the purity of awe and reverence, to *mind*. They had an indolent contempt for philosophy, for beauty, for contemplation. There were so many of them that the thronged, unventilated lecture halls smelled of old shoes, stale flatulence, boredom. The younger students sprawled or squatted in the aisles while the veterans took mechanical notes in childishly slanted handwriting. Their gaze was thickened; dense, as if in trance; exhausted. When, in the first session of the term, a professor of Government (a required course), quoting Aristotle, startled the air with "Man is by nature a political animal," they never looked up—as if "animal" used like that were not the most amazing word in the world. Nothing struck them as new, nothing enchanted them, nothing could astonish them. They were too old, too enervated, too indifferent. In the commons, I would hear them comparing used cars. They were despoiling my youth.

And youth was what I was jealous of: youth in combination with literary passion. Nowadays, one can hardly set down this phrase—"literary passion"—without the teasing irony of quotation marks, representing abashed self-mockery: the silly laughter of old shame. Of course, the veterans were right: they had survived the battlegrounds of catastrophic Asia and Europe, had seen mortal fragility and burned human

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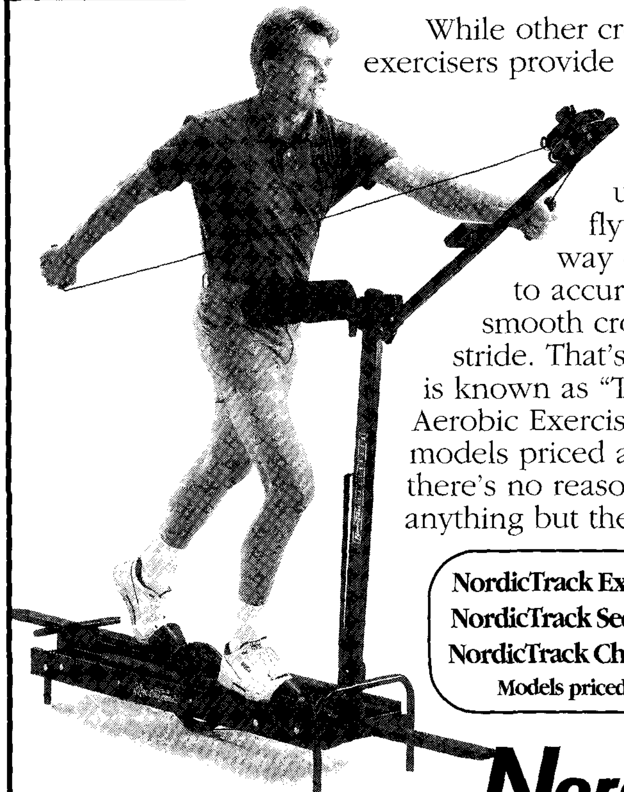

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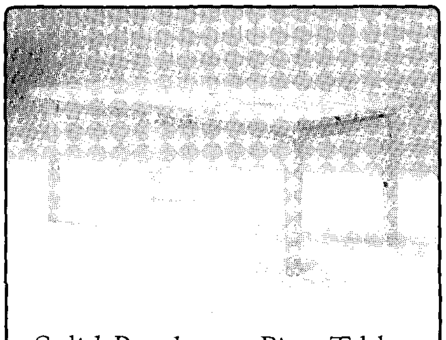

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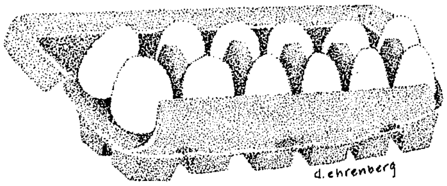
flesh up close, and were preparing for the restoration of their lives—whereas I, lately besotted by the Aeneid, by "Christabel," by Shelley's cloud and Keats' nightingale, was an adolescent of seventeen. Chester, though, claimed to be sixteen still—the other side of the divide. He had the face of a very young child. His skin was as pure and unmarked as a three-year-old's, and he had a little rosy mouth, with small rosy lips. His lips were as beautifully formed as a doll's. His pretty nose was the least noticeable element of his pretty face; the most noticeable was the eyelids, which seemed oddly fat. It took some time—weeks, or perhaps months—to fathom that what distinguished these eyelids, what gave them their strangeness, was that they were altogether bald. Chester had neither eyebrows nor eyelashes. He was a completely hairless boy.

He was, besides, short and ovoid, with short, active fingers like working pencil erasers. His pale eyes were small and shy; but they had a hidden look—a kind of skip, a quickstep of momentary caution. We stood at the blackboard in a mostly empty classroom, doodling with the chalk. The veterans, those wearily cynical old men, began straggling in, swallowing up the rows of chairs, while Chester and I made tentative tugs at each other's credentials. He identified himself as a writer. Ordinarily, I was skeptical about such claims; high school had already proved the limitations of the so-called flair. He told me the name of his high school. I told him the name of mine. I knew without his mentioning it that he had arrived by subway from Brooklyn. I knew it because he had one of the two varieties of Brooklyn speech I could recognize: the first was exceedingly quick; the other was exceedingly slow, dragging out the vowels. Chester's talk sped, the toe of the next sentence stumbling over the heel of the last. He was an engine of eagerness. I was, in those days, priggishly speech-conscious, having been subdued by the Shavian Pygmalions of my high-school Speech Department, under whose fierce eyes, only a couple of weeks earlier, I had delivered the graduating address. These zealous teachers, missionaries of the glottis and the diaphragm, had effectively suppressed the miscreant northeast Bronx dentalizations of Pelham Bay: a fragrant nook of meadows and vacant lots overgrown with cattails and wildflowers, archeologically pocked with the ruins of old foundations—contractors' start-ups halted by the Depression, and rotting now into mossy caverns. I lived at the subway's farthest vertebra—the end of the Pelham Bay line—but the ladies of the Speech Department (all three of whom had nineteenth-century literary names: Ruby, Olive, Evangeline) had turned *me* into a lady, and severed me forever from the hot notes of New York. Chester, rapid-fire, slid up and down those notes—not brashly but minstrel-like, ardent, pizzicato. I saw into him then—a tender, sheltered, eager child. And also: an envious, hungry writing beast, and not in embryo. In short, he was what I knew myself to be, though mine was the heavier envy, the envy that stung all the more, because Chester was sixteen and I was not.

The veterans were invisible. We dismissed them as not pertinent. What was pertinent was this room and what would happen in it. Here were the veterans, who were invisible; here was a resentful young woman, who was to vanish within the week; here was Chester; and Mr. Emerson; and myself, the only surviving female. The young woman who deserted complained that Mr. Emerson never acknowledged her, never called on her to speak, even when her hand was conspicuously up. "Woman hater!" she spat out, and ran off to another course section. What it came to, then, when you subtracted the veterans, was three. But since Mr. Emerson was what he was—a force of nature, a geological fault, a gorge, a thunderstorm—what it came to, in reality, was two. For Chester and for me, whatever it might have been for the veterans, in their colorless hordes, there was no "freshman composition." A cauldron, perhaps; a cockpit. Chester and I were roped-off roosters, or a pair of dogs set against each other—pit bulls—or gladiators, obliged to fight to the death. All this was Mr. Emerson's scheme—or call it his vise or toy—arbitrarily settled on after the first assignment: a character study, in five hundred words.

On the day the papers were returned, Mr. Emerson ordered me to stand in front of the class—in front of Chester, in effect—and read aloud what I had written. There was an explicit format for these essays: an official tablet had to be bought at the university bookstore, with blanks to be filled in. Then the sheets had to be folded in half. The outer surface was for the instructor's grade and comment.



"Read that first sentence!" Mr. Emerson bawled.

I looked down at my paper. There was no grade and no comment.

" 'Gifford was a taciturn man,' " I read.

"Louder! Wake up those sleeping soldiers back there! And keep in mind that I'm a man who's deaf in one ear. What's that goddam adjective?"

" 'Taciturn.' "

"Where'd you swipe it from?"

"I guess I just thought of it," I said.

"Picked it up someplace, hah? Well, what in hell's it mean?"

It was true that I had only recently learned this word, and was putting it to use for the first time.

"Does it mean quiet?" I choked out.

"Don't ask *me*, Miss. I'm the one that's supposed to do the goddam asking."

"I think it means quiet."

"You think! *I* think you got it out of some trash heap. Read on," he commanded.

He let me continue, quavering, for another paragraph or so. Then his arm shot out like a Mussolini salute.

"All right, Miss. Sit! Now you! Chester!"

Chester stood. The somnolent veterans were surprised into alertness: they stared across at the ringmaster and his livestock. Now the rapid Brooklyn voice began—a boy's voice, a boy's throat. The little pink lips—that rosy bouquet—stretched and pursed, looped and flattened. Chester read almost to the end; Mr. Emerson never interrupted. Humiliated, concentrating, I knew what I was hearing. Behind that fragile mouth, dangerous fires curled: a furnace, a burning bush. The coarse cap of false orange-yellow hair shook—it narrowed Chester's forehead, lifted itself off his nape, wobbled along the tops of his ears. He was bold, he was rousing, he was loud enough for a man deaf in one ear. It was ambition. It was my secret self.

"That's enough. Sit, Chester!" Mr. Emerson yelled. "Gentlemen, you'l never find a woman who can write. The ladies can't do it. They don't have what it takes, that's well known. It's universal wisdom, and I believe it. All the same," he said, "these two, Chester and the lady, I'm not the fool that's going to let them drop back into the pond with the catfish."

After that, Chester and I had separate writing assignments—separate, that is, from the rest of the class. Mr. Emerson may have been a woman hater, but it was the veterans he declined to notice and looked to snub. His teaching (if that is what it was) was exclusively for the two of us. It was for our sakes that he disparaged Walt Whitman—"that plumber," he sneered. It was for our sakes that he devoted minutes every day—irascible still, yet reverential—to praising "Brideshead Revisited," the Evelyn Waugh best-seller he was reading between classes. And sometimes *in* class. While the veterans slid down in their seats, Mr. Emerson opened to where he had left off and fell into a dry recital:

> I was always given the room I had on my first visit; it was next to Sebastian's, and we shared what had once been a dressing-room and had been changed to a bathroom twenty years back by the substitution for the bed of a deep, copper, mahogany-framed bath, that was filled by pulling a brass lever heavy as a piece of marine engineering; the rest of the room remained unchanged; a coal fire always burned there in winter. I often think of that bathroom—the water colours dimmed by steam and the huge towel warming on the back of the chintz armchair—and contrast it with the uniform, clinical little chambers, glittering with chromium plate and looking-glass, which pass for luxury in the modern world.

Dry, but there was a suppressed rapture in it—rapture for the brass lever, for the water colours (in their transporting British spelling) dimmed by steam. It was clear that Mr. Emerson himself, an unhappy man with tired eyes—they often teared—did not like the modern world; perhaps he would not have liked any world, even one with picturesque coal fires. In the grip of some defenseless fatigue, he gave way to fits of yawning. His snarl was inexhaustible; also comically unpredictable. He took a sardonic pleasure in shock. Certainly he shocked me, newly hatched out of the decorous claims of Hunter High (finishing school cum Latin prep), where civilization hung on the position of a consonant struck upon the palate (never against the teeth), and mastery of the ablative absolute marked one out for higher things. Mr. Emerson said "God damn," he said "hell," he even alluded, now and then, to what I took to be sexual heat.

It was not that I was ignorant of sexual heat; I had already come upon it in the Aeneid. There it was, in Dido and Aeneas—Dido on her pyre, burning for love! And here it was again, between Agnes and Gerald in the dell, in "The Longest Journey," the early E. M. Forster novel, which was included in our Freshman Composition curriculum. The first paragraphs alone—well before sexual heat made its appearance—were undiluted pleasure:

> "The cow is there," said Ansell, lighting a match and holding it out over the carpet. No one spoke. He waited till the end of the match fell off. Then he said again, "She is there, the cow. There, now."
>
> "You have not proved it," said a voice.
>
> "I have proved it to myself."
>
> "I have proved to myself that she isn't," said the voice. "The cow is *not* there." Ansell frowned and lit another match.
>
> "She's there for me," he declared. "I don't care whether she's there for you or not. Whether I'm in Cambridge or Iceland or dead, the cow will be there."
>
> It was philosophy. They were discussing the existence of objects. Do they exist only when there is some one to look at them? or have they a real existence of their own? It is all very interesting, but at the same time it is difficult. Hence the cow. She seemed to make things easier. She was so familiar, so solid.

None of this was familiar in the spring of 1946: E. M. Forster was an unknown name, at least to me; philosophy lay ahead. Nothing was solid. Rickie and Ansell were lost in Mr. Emerson's mercurial derisions. For years afterward, I remembered only Rickie's limp. Much later, I began to read "The Longest Journey" over and over again until, ultimately, I had certain passages by heart. In class, it was hardly discussed at all. It appeared to hold no interest for Mr. Emerson, and Chester and I never spoke of it. It was not what we read that counted for Mr. Emerson anyhow; it was what we wrote. Chester and I wrote—were intended to write—as rivals, as yoked competitors under the whip. "Got you that time, didn't she? Made you look small, didn't she?" he chortled at Chester. And, the following week, to me: "Males beat females, it's in the nature of things. He's got the stuff, the genuine shout. He's wiped you out to an echo, Miss, believe me." Sometimes he made no comment at all, and returned our papers, along with the weekly work of the rest of the class, giving us no more than a cocky glare. That left

"There is no sterner moralist than pleasure."
–Lord Byron

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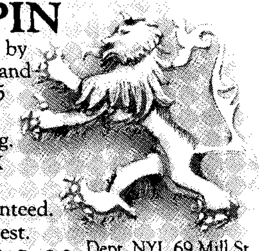

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us stymied; there was no way to find out which of us had won. Since Mr. Emerson never graded what Chester and I turned in (he routinely graded the others' papers), the only possible conclusion was that we were both unworthy. And the next week he would be at it again: "She knocked you off your high horse, hah, Chester?" Or "You'd better quit, Miss, you'll never be in the running." All that term, we were—Chester and I—a pair of cymbals, striking and ringing in midair; or two panting hares, flanks heaving, in a mad marathon; or a couple of legs-entangled wrestlers in a fevered embrace. It was as if—for whatever obscure reason—Mr. Emerson had flung himself into the role of some sly, languid, and vainglorious Roman emperor presiding over the bloody goings on in the Colosseum of his classroom, with the little green buds of Washington Square Park just beginning to unfold below the college windows.

WHAT came out of it, besides a conflagration of jealousy, was fraternity. I loved Chester: he was my brother; he was the first real writer of my generation I had ever met—a thing I knew immediately. It was evident in the increasingly rococo noise of his language, and in Mr. Emerson's retributive glee. If, conceivably, promoting envy was Mr. Emerson's hidden object in encouraging the savagery of Chester's competitiveness with me, and mine with him, it was his own envy that Mr. Emerson suffered from, and was picking at. It is not unheard-of for older would-be writers to be enraged by younger would-be writers. The economy of writing always operates according to a feudal logic: the aristocracy blots out all the rest. There is no middle class. The heights belong to, at most, four or five writers, a princely crew; the remainder are invisible, or else have the partial, now-and-then visibility that attaches to minor status. Every young writer imagines only the heights; no one aspires to be minor or invisible, and when, finally, the recognition of where one stands arrives, as it must, in maturity, one accepts the limitations of fate or talent, or else surrenders to sour cynicism. Whether Mr. Emerson was embittered by chances lost or hope denied or by some sorrowful secret narrowing of his private life, it was impossible to tell. Whatever it was, it threw Chester and me, red in tooth and claw, into each other's arms. It also made us proud: we had been set apart and declared to be of noble blood. (All this, of course, may be retrospective hubris. Perhaps Mr. Emerson saw us as no more than what we were: a couple of literary-minded freshmen whose strenuousness an attentive teacher was generously serving and cultivating.)

We took to walking up and down Fourth Avenue in the afternoons, the two of us, darting into one after another of those rows of secondhand bookstores the long, straight street was famous for. The cheapest books were crammed into sidewalk racks under awnings, to protect them from the rain. It seemed to be always raining that spring—a tenderly fickle drizzle and fizz, which first speckled and then darkened the pavement, and made Chester hood the crown of his head with his jacket. We drilled into back rooms and creaked down wooden basement steps; everywhere, those thousands of books had the sewery smell of cellar—repellent, earthen, heart-catching. In these dank crypts, with their dim electric bulbs hanging low on wires over tables heaped with comatose and forgotten volumes, and an infinity of collapsing shelves lining broken-plastered walls and labelled "Theosophy," "History," "Poetry" (signs nailed up decades back, faded and curled by dampness), one could loiter uninterrupted forever. The proprietor was somewhere above, most likely on a folding chair in the doorway, hunched over a book of his own, cozily insulated from the intrusions of customers, bothering nobody and hoping not to be bothered himself. Gradually, the cellar smells would be converted, or consecrated, into a sort of blissful incense; nostrils that flinched in retreat opened to the tremulous savor of books waiting to be aroused, and to arouse. Meandering in the skinny aisles of these seductive cellars, Chester and I talked of our childhoods, and of our noses. I admired Chester's nose and deplored my own. "Yours isn't so bad, just a little wide," he said kindly. He told me of his long-ago childhood disease; he did not name it, though he explained that because of it he had lost all his hair. He did not say that he wore a wig.

There was something Hansel-and-Gretelish about our excursions, so brotherly and sisterly, so childlike and intimate, yet prickly in their newness. Fresh from an all-girls' high school, I had never before conversed with a boy about books and life. I had never before gone anywhere with a boy. Boys were strangers, and also—in my experience, if not in principle—as biologically unfathomable as extraterrestrials. Though I had a brother, there was a divide between us: he had ascended to college when I was in grade school, and at this hour was in the Army. At home, with my parents at work in their pharmacy, I had the house to myself: I sat at my little wooden Sears, Roebuck desk (a hand-me-down from my brother, the very desk I am using right now) and fearfully grappled with my five hundred words for Mr. Emerson, jealous of what I imagined Chester might be contriving on the same subject, and burning against him with a wild will. I wanted more than anything to beat him; I was afraid he would beat me. When I listened to him read his paper aloud, as Mr. Emerson occasionally had us do even well into the semester, a shrewdly hooked narrative turn or an ingenious figure of speech or some turbulently reckless flash of power would afflict me like a wound. Chester was startling, he was robust, he was lyrical, he was wry, he was psychological, he was playful, he was scandalous. He was better than I was! In one respect, though, I began to think I was stronger. We were equally attracted to the usual adolescent literary moonings: to loneliness, morbidity, a certain freakishness of personality. But I felt in myself stirrings of history, of idea, of something beyond the senses: I was infatuated with German and Latin, I exulted over the Reformation. I supposed that this enthusiasm meant I was more *serious* than Chester—more serious, I presumed, about the courses we were enrolled in. Chester was indifferent to all that. Except for English classes, he was careless, unexcited. He was already on his way to bohemianism (a term then still in its flower). I, more naïvely, more conventionally, valued getting an A; I pressed to excel, and to be seen to excel. I thought of myself as a neophyte, a beginner, an apprentice; it would be years and years (decades, aeons) before I could accomplish anything worth noticing. I regarded my teachers not as gods but as

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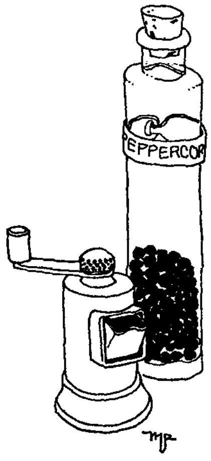
And still he was soft, susceptible. He was easily emotional. I saw him as sentimental, too quickly inflamed. He fell soppily in love at a moment's glance. And, because we were brother and sister, I was his confidante; he would tell me his loves, and afterward leave me feeling resentful and deserted. I was not one of the pretty girls. Boys ignored me; their habitual reconnoitring wheeled right over me and ran to the beauties. And here was Chester, no different from the others, with an eye out for looks—flirting, teasing, chasing. Nearly all young women seemed extraordinary that spring: archaic, Edwardian. The postwar fashion revolution, appropriately called the New Look, had descended—literally descended—in the form of long skirts whipping around ankles. All at once, half the population appeared to be in costume. Only a few months earlier, there had been a rigid measure for the length of a skirt: hems were obliged to reach precisely, uncompromisingly, to the lower part of the knee. What else had that meant but an irreversible modernity? Now the girls were trailing yards of bright or sober stuff, tripping over themselves, delightedly conspicuous, enchanted with their own clear absurdity. Chester chased after them; more often, they chased after Chester. When I came to meet him in the commons nowadays, he had a retinue. The girls moved in on him, and so did the incipient bohemians; he was more and more in the center of a raucous crowd. He was beginning to display himself—to accept or define himself—as a wit, and his wit, kamikaze assaults of paradox or shock, caught on. In no time at all, he had made himself famous in the commons—a businesslike place, where the resolute veterans, grinding away, ate their sandwiches with their elbows in their accounting texts. Chester's success was mine. He was my conduit and guide. Without him, I would have been buried alive in Washington Square, consumed by timidity.



He journeyed out to visit me twice—a tediously endless subway trip from the bowels of Brooklyn to Pelham Bay. We walked in the barren park, along untenanted crisscross paths, down the hill through the big meadow to the beach. I was proud of this cattailed scene—it was mine, it was my childhood, it was my Brontëan heath. Untrammelled grasses, the gray, keen water knocking against mossy stones: here I was master. Now that Chester was celebrated at school, I warmed to the privilege of having him to myself, steering him from prospect to prospect, until we were light-headed with the drizzly air. At the end of the day, at the foot of the high stair that led to the train, we said goodbye. He bent toward me—he was taller than I, though not by much—and kissed me. The pale, perfect lips and their cold spittle rested on my mouth; it was all new. It had never happened before—not with any other boy. I was bewildered, wildly uncertain; I shrank back, and told him I could not think of him like that—he was my brother. (Ah, to retrieve that instant, that Movietone remark learned from the silver screen of the Pilgrim Theatre, half a mile down the tracks! To retrieve it, to undo it, to wipe it out!) He wormed his blunt white fingers into his jacket pockets and stood for a while. The El's stanchions shook. Overhead, the train growled and headed downtown. Two puddles lay against his lower eyelids, unstanched by the missing lashes. It was the same, he said, with Diana; it was just the same, though Diana wasn't a brute, she hadn't said it outright. He didn't want to be anyone's brother—mine, maybe, but not Diana's. I knew Diana, a brilliant streak in the commons excitements: in those newfangled long skirts, she had a fleet, flashing step, and she wore postwar nylons and neat formal pumps. (Unrenovated, I was still in my high-school Sloppy Joes and saddle shoes.) Diana was one of the beauties, among the loveliest of all, with a last name that sounded as if it had fallen out of a Trollope novel but was actually Lebanese. In after years, I happened on a replica of her face on the salvaged wall of an ancient Roman villa, with its crimson tones preserved indelibly: black-rimmed Mediterranean eyes fixed in intelligence, blackly lit; round cheeks and chin, all creamy pink. An exquisite ur-Madonna. Diana had a generous heart, she was vastly kind and a little shy, with a penetrating attentiveness untypical of the young. Like many in Chester's crew, she was single-mindedly literary. (She is a poet of reputation now.) Chester yearned, and, more than anyone, Diana was the object and representation of his yearning.

But I yearned, too. The word itself—soaked in dream and Poesy—pretty well embodies what we were, Chester and I, in a time when there was no ostensible sex, only romance, and the erotic habits of the urban bookish young were confined to daring cafeteria discussions of the orgone box (a contrivance touted by Wilhelm Reich) and to severely limited gropings at parties in the parental domicile. One of these parties drew me to Brooklyn—it was my first look at this fabled place. The suburban atmosphere of Flatbush took me by surprise—wide streets and tall brick Tudor-style houses flawed only by being set too close together. The party, though it was given by a girl I will call Carla Baumblatt, was altogether Chester's: he had chosen the guests. Carla would not allow us to enter through the front door. Instead, she herded us toward the back yard and into the kitchen. She had managed to persuade her parents to leave the house, but her mother's admonishments were in the air. Carla worried about cigarette ashes, about food spilling, about muddy shoes—she especially worried about the condition of the living-room rug. Someone whispered to me that she was terribly afraid of her mother. And soon enough her mother came home: a tough, thin, tight little woman, with black hair tightly curled. Carla was big and matronly, twice her mother's size. She had capacious breasts that rode before her, and a homely mouth like a twist of wax, and springy brown hair, which she hated and attempted to squash down. She was dissatisfied with herself and with her life; there was no movie rhapsody in it. An argument began in the kitchen, and there was Carla, cowed by her tiny mother. Curiously, a kitchen scene turns up in Chester's first novel, "Jamie Is My Heart's Desire," which was published in England in 1956, a decade after Carla's party—the last time she ever tried to give a party at home. The narrator describes a young woman's "largeness": "I have always felt that her body was the wrong one, that it was an exaggerated contrast with her personality, and that one must disregard it in order to know Emily at all. It is her fault I have believed this so long, for in all her ways she has negated the strength and bigness her figure shows, and substituted weakness and dependency and fright, so that one imagines Emily within as a small powerless girl." When Carla reappeared in the living room after quarrelling with her mother, she seemed, despite her largeness, a small powerless girl; she was as pale as if she had been beaten, and she again warned us about dirtying the carpet.

In the middle of that carpet, a young woman lay in a mustard glow. Her head was on a fat cushion. Her mustard-colored hair flowed out over the floor. Her mustard-colored New Look skirt was flung into folds around her. She was sprawled there like an indolent cat. Now and again, she sat up and perched her chin on her knee; then the dark trough between her breasts filled with lamplight. She had tigers' eyes, greenly chiaroscuro, dappled with unexpected tinsel flecks. Her name was Tatyana; she gave out the urgency of theatre, of Dostoyevski, of seagulls. A circle of chairs had somehow grouped in front of her; she had us as audience, or as a body of travellers stung by a spell into fixity.

Carla, stumbling in from the kitchen, seemed devoured by the sight: it was the majesty of pure sexuality. It was animal beauty. Carla's plump stooped shoulders and plump homely nose fell into humility. She called to Chester—they were old neighborhood friends, affectionate old school friends. The familial currents that passed between them had the unearned rhythms of priority. I resented Carla: she had earlier claims than I, almost the eariest of all. I thought of her as a eftover from Chester's former life—he life before Mr. Emerson. It was only sentimentality that continued to bind him to her. She was a blot on his escutcheon. She had no talents other han easy sociability.

Chester had inherited her along with other remnants of his younger expe-

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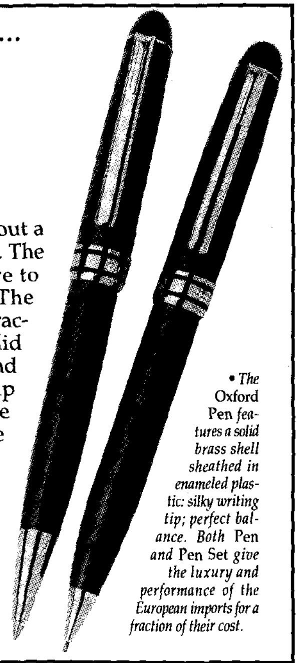

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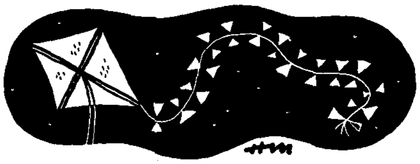
rience. He rested in Carla's sympathy. I imagined she knew the secret of the yellow wig. Away from home, in the commons, she was freely companionable and hospitable: she would catch hold of me in the incoming lunch crowd and wave me over to her table. But we did not like each other. On Chester's account we pretended congeniality. Worse yet, Carla simulated bookishness; it was an attempt to keep up. In April, on my eighteenth birthday, she astonished me with a present: it was Proust, "Cities of the Plain," in the Modern Library edition. Carla was so far from actual good will that her gift struck me as an intrusion, or an act of hollow flattery, or an appeasement. I owned few books (like everyone else, I frequented the public library), and wanted to love with a body-love the volumes that came permanently into my hands. I could not love a book from Carla. When I eventually undertook to read "Cities of the Plain," it was not the copy she had given me. I have Carla's copy in front of me now, still unfondled, and inscribed as follows: "*Ma chêre—c'est domage que ce livre n'est pas dans l'originale—mais vous devriez être une si marveilleuse linguiste comme moi pour lire cela— Amour toujours—*" Carla's English was equally breezy and misspelled. Her handwriting was a superlegible series of girlish loops.

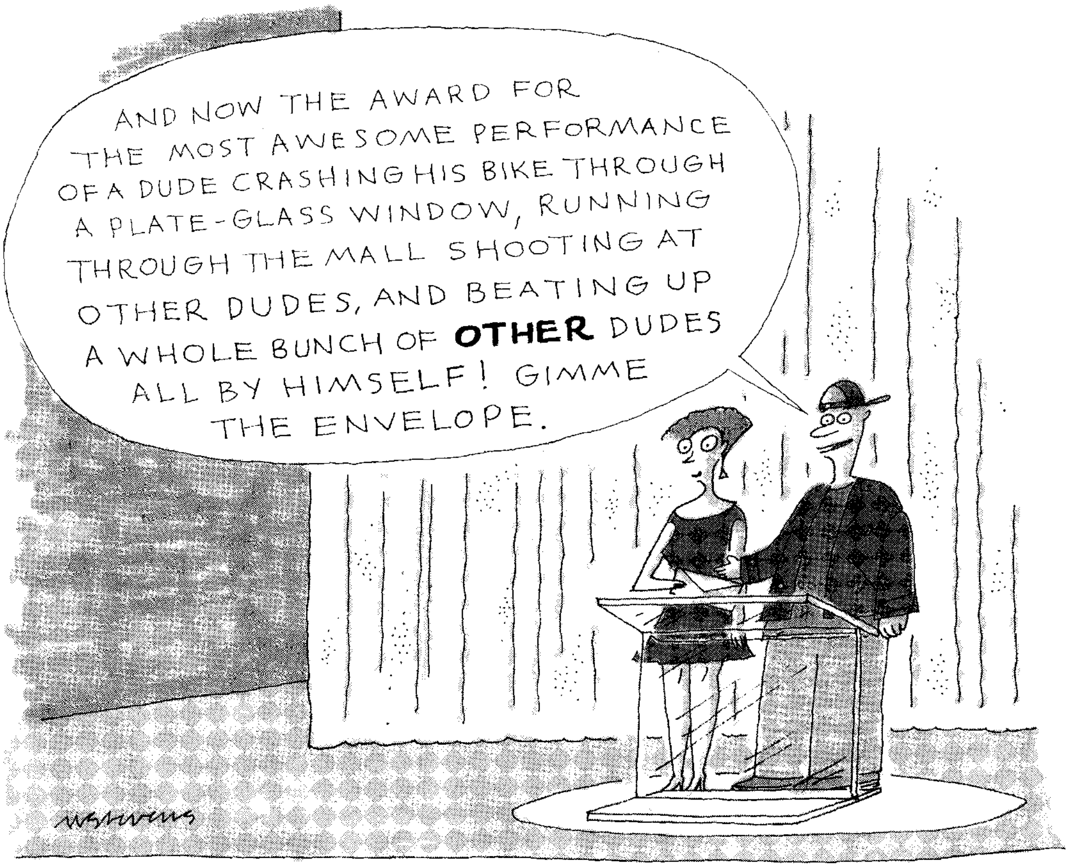
Because of Tatyana—the mustard glow on Carla's mother's carpet—Chester was undistractible. When Carla tried to get his attention, he grunted some mockery, but it was directed at Tatyana. He was a man in a trance of adoration; he was illuminated. Tatyana stretched her catlike flanks and laughed her mermaid's laughter. She was woman, cat, fish—silvery, slithery, mustard-colored. She spread her hair and whirled it. She teased, turned, played, parried, flirted. The room swam with jealousy—not simply Carla's, or mine, or the other girls'. Call it the jealousy of the gods: Tatyana, a mortal young woman, was in the seizure of an unearthly instant. With the holy power of their femaleness, her eyes traversed our faces.

THE second, and last, time Chester came to Pelham Bay, it was in the company of Ben Solomons. Ben had become Chester's unlikely sidekick. Together, they were Mutt and Jeff, tall broom and squat pepper pot, Arthur's handsomest knight and Humpty-Dumpty. Ben was nicely dressed and not very talkative—taciturn! He was a little older than I (even weeks counted), and had the well-polished shoes of a serious pre-med student. (When I heard, decades later, that he was Dr. Solomons, the psychiatrist, I was surprised. Not urology? Not gastroenterology?) Since he did not say much, it was hard to assess his intelligence. What mattered to me, though, was his tallness, his nearness, his breath. I had been sickened, that afternoon, by infatuation: out of the blue, I was in love with Ben. The lunch my mother had left us was mysteriously unsatisfactory; it lacked some bourgeois quality I was growing aware of—the plates, the tablecloth, the dining-room chairs. It was only food. All my tries at entertainment were a nervous failure. At three o'clock, we walked, in the eternal rain (Chester's jacket up over his head), to see a movie at the Pilgrim—called, in the neighborhood, the Pillbox, because it was so cramped. In the middle of the day, the theatre was desolate. I was self-conscious, guilty, embarrassed. It was as if I had dragged us to a pointless moonscape. We settled into the center of the house—I, Ben, and Chester, in that order, along a row of vacant seats. The movie came on; I suffered. Next to me, Ben was bored. Chester tossed out cracks about the dialogue; I laughed, miserably; Ben was silent. Then I shut my eyes, and kept them shut. It was a wall against tears. It was to fabricate boredom and flatter Ben's judgment. It was to get Ben to notice. His big hand on his left knee, with his gold high-school-graduation ring pressed against the knuckle, drew me into teary desire. I unsealed an eye to be sure that they were still there—the hand, the ring, the knuckle. Ben was sedate, waiting out the hours.

At the time, it seemed a long friendship—Chester's with Ben—and except for that single, aching afternoon in Pelham Bay, which came like a fever and passed like a fever, I was as wary of Ben as I was of Carla, as I was of Chester's ascent into Tatyana's apotheosis. Jealous like Byron's sister, I wanted Chester for myself. I understood that it was useless: he was a public magnet. Everyone was his straight man and acolyte. To be with Chester was to join his gang at the edge of bohemia—or what was imagined to be bohemia, since all the would-be bohemians went home every night, by subway, to their fathers and mothers in their Bronx and Brooklyn apartments. In our little house in Pelham Bay, I had my own tiny room, flowery with the do-it-yourself yellow wallpaper my mother had put up as a surprise. Onto this surface I pasted, with Scotch Tape, a disjointed Picasso woman, cut out from *Life*. She was all bright whorls and stripes and misplaced eyes and ears. She had whirligig breasts. She gave me pride but no pleasure. She stood for eccentricity, for the Unconventional—she was an inkling of what Chester was deliberately heading for. There was nothing of any of this in Ben—no scrambled testing grounds, no pugnacity, no recklessness, no longing for the inchoate, no unconventionality. No intimations of unknown realms. He was a solid student, with inconspicuous notions. He was conspicuously good-looking, in the style of the familiar hero of a nineteen-forties B-movie: broad-shouldered, square-chinned, long-lashed. His chief attraction was the velvety plenitude of his deeply black hair; one wavy lock dropped in a scallop on his forehead, like Superman's. Ben was rarely seen in the commons. He was not one of Chester's cosmopolitan hangers-on; he was too businesslike, too intent on propriety. But he represented for Chester what my Picasso woman represented for me: the thing closed off, the thing one could not become. I could not become one of the bohemians: I was diffident and too earnest, too "inhibited"; I was considered "naïve"; I was not daring enough. When Chester's gang began to meet in Village bars after classes, I envied but could not follow.



Yellowing on the yellow walls, my cutout Picasso lingered for years. Chester's attachment to Ben was, by contrast, brief, though while it lasted it was a stretched-out, slow-motion sequence—the stages of a laboratory experiment requiring watchful patience. Ben had the glamorous long torso Chester would have liked to have. He had, especially, the hair. Ben was a surrogate body, a surrogate head of hair. Girls were smitten by him. He was an ambassador from the nation of the normal and the ordinary. When Chester cast off Ben, it was his farewell to the normal and the ordinary. It was the beginning of the voyage out. In the commons one day not long after Ben was jettisoned, I came on Chester surrounded by his gang and dangling, between third finger and thumb, a single hair. I asked (the innocent candor of an assistant clown) what it was. "A pubic hair," he retorted.


AND NOW THE AWARD FOR THE MOST AWESOME PERFORMANCE OF A DUDE CRASHING HIS BIKE THROUGH A PLATE-GLASS WINDOW, RUNNING THROUGH THE MALL SHOOTING AT OTHER DUDES, AND BEATING UP A WHOLE BUNCH OF **OTHER** DUDES ALL BY HIMSELF! GIMME THE ENVELOPE.

He was never again not outrageous; he was never again soft. He had determined to shut down the dreamy boy who mooned over girls. Either they rebuffed him or, worse, they embraced him as a friendly pet, good for banter or hilarity. He was nobody's serious boyfriend. Tatyana, after Carla's party, had gone on cosseting him as a plaything to tantalize. Diana, always empathic, withheld the recesses of her heart. I was a literary rival—a puritan and a bluestocking. Carla was an old shoe. What was left for Chester's moist sensibility, having been so crushed? It dried into celebrity. It dried into insolence and caprice. Chester's college fame depended—was founded—on the acid riposte, the quick sting; on anything implausible. He flung out the unexpected, the grotesque, the abnormal. Truman Capote's short stories were in vogue then—miniature gothic concoctions specializing in weird little girls, in clairvoyance, in the uncanny. Chester began modelling his own stories on them. He committed to memory long passages from an eerie narrative called "Miriam"; he was bewitched by Truman Capote's lushness, mystery, baroque style. In his own writing he was gradually melting into Truman Capote. He opened his wallet and pulled out an address book: that number there, he bragged, was Truman Capote's unlisted telephone, set down by the polished little Master himself.

All this while, Chester was wearing the yellow wig. He wore it more and more carelessly. It was as crinkled as a sheep's belly, and now took on a grimy, ragged, neglected look. It hardly mattered to him if it went askew, lifting from his ears or pressing too far down over where the eyebrows should have been.

• •

IN 1966, he completed "The Foot," a novel that is more diary and memoir than fiction. By then, his style was entering its last phase: disjointed, arbitrary, surreal; deliberately beautiful for a phrase or two, then deliberately unbeautiful, then dissolved into sloth. The characters are mercurial fragments or shadowless ghosts, wrested from exhaustion by a drugged and disintegrating will: Mary Monday and her double, also named Mary Monday, a play on Susan Sontag; Peter Plate, representing Paul Bowles, the novelist and composer, whom Chester knew in Morocco; Larbi ("the Arab"), a stand-in for Chester's cook, servant, and sexual companion. All changing themes and short takes, "The Foot" is part travelogue (portraits of Morocco and of New York), part writhing confession ("my long idle life, always occupied with my suffering," "I am afraid of who I am behind my own impersonations"), and part portentous, pointless fantasy. The effect is of a home slide show in a blackened room: the slides click by, mainly of gargoyles, and then, without warning, a series of recognizable family shots flashes out—but even these responsible, ordinary people are engaging in gargoylish activity. In this way, one impressionistic sketch after another jumps into the light, interrupted by satiric riffs—satiric even when mildly pornographic—until four heartbreaking pages of suffering recollected without tranquillity all at once break out of their frames of dread, cry their child's cry, and fall back into the blackness. "Do you let a book like this, this book, go back into the world just as it is—with its wounds and blemishes, its bald head and lashless eyes, exposed to the light?" the section starts off, and darkens into a melancholy unburdening:

> I was fourteen when I put on my first wig. It was, I believe, my sister's idea. So she and my mother and I went—I forget where . . . Simmons & Co.?—some elegantish salon with gold lamé drapes where they did not do such splendid work.
>
> I sat and accepted the wig. It was like having an ax driven straight down the middle of my body. Beginning at the head. Whack! Hacked in two with one blow like a dry little tree. Like a sad little New York tree.
>
> I wore it to school only. Every morning my mother put it on for me in front of the mirror in the kitchen and carefully combed it and puffed it and fluffed it and pasted it down. Then, before going out of the house, I would jam a hat on top of it, a brown fedora, and

flatten the wig into a kind of matting. I hated it and was ashamed of it, and it made me feel guilty.

And so to school. The Abraham Lincoln High School.

Up until then I'd gone to a Yeshiva where all the boys wore hats, little black yarmulkas. I too wore a hat, though not a yarmulka, which only covered the tip of the head. I wore a variety of caps. I'd wear a cap to shreds before getting a new one, since I felt any change at all focused more attention on my head. . . .

Coming home from school was a problem. As once the world had been divided for me into Jews and Italians, it was now divided between those who could see me with the wig and those who could see me with a hat. Only my most immediate family—mother, father, sister, brother—could see me with both, and only they could see me bald.

Hat people and wig people. Wig people at school. Hat people at home. The wig people could see me with both wig *and* hat (hat-on-top-of-wig, that is). But the hat people must never see me with wig, or even with wig and hat.

This went on for years, decades.

The terror of encountering one side in the camp of the other. Of the wig people catching me without the wig. Of the hat people catching me with it. Terror . . .

And then, there from the corner where the trolley stopped, if it was a fair day, I would see my mother and maybe an aunt or two or a neighbor sitting on our porch in the sun.

Hat people.

Horrible, unbearable, the thought of walking past those ladies to get into the house. . . .

Sometimes I would go around corners, down alleys, through other people's gardens to reach our back fence. I'd climb over the back fence so I could get into the house via the back door which was usually open.

A thief! Just like a thief I'd have to sneak through the side lanes, unseen across backyards. . . .

I could bear no references to the wig. If I had to wear one, all right. But I wasn't going to talk about it. It was like some obscenity, some desperate crime on my head. It was hot coals in my mouth, steel claws gripping my heart, etc. I didn't want to recognize the wig . . . or even my baldness. It just wasn't there. Nothing was there. It was just something that didn't exist, like a third arm, so how could you talk about it? But it hurt, it hurt. . . .

My second wig was a much fancier job than the first. An old Alsatian couple made it; I think they were anti-Semitic, she out of tradition, he out of fidelity to her.

When the wig was ready, my father and mother and I went to collect it. Evening. I wish I could remember my father's reaction. Mama probably fussed and complained. I imagine Papa, though, like me, simply pretending that the whole thing didn't exist, wasn't even happening. . . .

Anyway, most likely, he said something polite like—how nice it looks! . . .

But the evening of the new wig we went to a restaurant, me wearing the wig. A white-tiled Jewish restaurant. Vegetarian . . . With fluorescent lights . . .

I just want you to see the three of us—even at home we never ate together—at that white-linened, white-tiled, blue-white-lighted restaurant. . . .

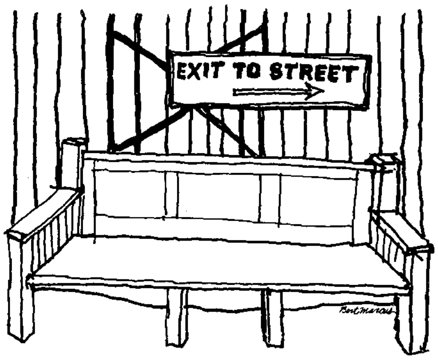
I wonder what we ate that night or why the evening took place at all. It is such a strange thing for Papa to have done. Gone to the wigmakers at all. Met me and Mama in the city. Taken us out to supper.

Perhaps there were a lot of mirrors in that restaurant. Catching a glimpse of myself, wig or no, is dreadful for me. I have to approach a mirror fully prepared, with all my armor on.

But I have a turn-off mechanism for mirrors as well. The glimpse-mirrors, I mean. I simply go blind.

When Chester set down these afflicted paragraphs, he was thirty-seven years old. He had long ago discarded the wig. He had long ago discarded our friendship. He had ascended into the hanging gardens of literary celebrity: *Esquire* included him in its "Red Hot Center" of American writing, and he was a prolific and provocative reviewer in periodicals such as *Partisan Review* and *Commentary*. He had lived in Paris, close to the founding circle of *Paris Review;* at parties, he drank with Jimmy Baldwin and George Plimpton. He had been drawn to Morocco by Paul Bowles, who, according to legend, ruled in Tangier like a foreign mandarin, ringed by respectful disciples and vaguely literary satellites devoted to smoking kif. In Morocco, Chester finally took off the wig for good; I, who knew him only when he was still at home with his family in Brooklyn, never saw him without it. His anguish was an undisclosable secret. The wig could not be mentioned—neither by wig wearer nor by wig watcher. No one dared any kind of comment or gesture. Yet there were hints that Ben Solomons had somehow passed through this taboo: on the rainy day Chester brought him to Pelham Bay, it was Ben who, with a sheltering sweep around Chester's shoulders, made the first move to raise Chester's jacket up over his matted crown.

Gore Vidal, in his introduction to a posthumous collection—including "The Foot"—of Chester's fiction ("Head of a Sad Angel: Stories 1953-1966," edited by Edward Field; Black Sparrow; 1990), speaks of Chester's life as "a fascinating black comedy," and concludes, "Drink and drugs, paranoia and sinister pieces of trade did him in early." I suppose he is not wrong. Yet "sinister pieces of trade" is an odious locution and a hard judgment, even if one lacks, as I confess I do, the wherewithal—the plain data—to see into its unreachable recesses. Vidal calls Chester "Genet with a brain." But if Vidal is alluding to the bleaker side of homosexual mores Chester himself can be neither his source nor his guide; Chester's breezy erotic spirit has more in common with the goat-god Pan at play than with Genet in prison scratching a recording pencil across brown paper bags. (Genet's portraits of homosexuals were anyhow tantamount to heartbreak for Chester. "The naked truth of Genet's writing continues to be unbearable," he remarked in a 1964 review of "Our Lady of the Flowers." And he noted that even "the ecstatic whole of [a] masterpiece" is "cold comfort to a man in agony.")



Though in "The Foot" Chester had fleetingly touched on home and family, almost nothing in his mind was not literary. His life, nearly all of it, was a lyrical, satirical, and theatrical mirage. In the end, the mirage hardened into a looking glass. But what was not strained through literary affectation or imitation or dreamscape, what it would be crueller than cruel to think of as black comedy, is the child's shame, the child's naked truth, that hits out like a blast of lightning at the close of "The Foot." The child is set apart as a freak. And then the bald boy grows into a bold man; but inside the unfinished man—unfinished because the boy has still not been exorcised—the hairless child goes on suffering, the harried boy runs. "I did have the great good luck never to have so much as glimpsed Alfred Chester," Vidal acknowledges. Nevertheless, he does not hesitate to name him "a genuine monster." It may require a worldly imagination of a certain toughened particularity—a temperament familiar with kinkiness and hospitable to it—to follow Vidal into his conjectures concerning Chester's sexual practices ("sinister pieces of trade"), but one must leave all heartlessness behind in order to enter the terrors of the man, or the child, who believes he is a monster.

And it was only baldness. Or it was not so much baldness as wig. From any common-sense point of view, baldness is not a significant abnormality, and in the adult male is no anomaly at all. But the child felt himself to be abnormal, monstrous. The child was stricken. The child saw himself a frenzied freak tearing down lane after lane in search of a path of escape.

That path of escape (I was sure of it four decades ago, and am partly persuaded of it even now) was homosexuality—implying an alternative community, an alternative ethos, an alternative system of getting and receiving attention. Chester loved women; women would not love him back; Q.E.D. They would not love him back because, by his own reckoning, he was abnormal, monstrous, freakish. He was too horrifically ugly. With this gruesome impetus, he turned his hairless, beardless, lashless countenance to the alternative world, a world without women, where no woman could wound him, because no woman belonged.

All this—folded invisibly, or not so invisibly, into notions of "the nature of love"—I wrote to Chester, in a letter sent to Paris. I had heard that he had "become homosexual." (I had learned the phrase at Washington Square College—not from Mr. Emerson—at eighteen. "Gay" had not yet come into general use.) We had been corresponding, not without acrimony, about Thomas Mann. Chester was contemptuous. "Middlebrow! Somerset Maugham in German," he growled from across the sea, though he had so far not approached a word of anything by Mann. I urged him to read "Death in Venice." He wrote back, exalted. It was, he said, among the great works of literature; he declared himself converted. By then, we had been separated for two or three years. He had gone off to be one of the expatriates in the second Parisian wave—modelled on Hemingway and Gertrude Stein in the first—and I, returning from graduate school in the Midwest, had settled back into my tiny yellow bedroom in Pelham Bay to become a writer. My idea was to produce a long philosophical novel that would combine the attributes of André Gide, Henry James, George Eliot, Graham Greene, and Santayana's "The Last Puritan"; it was an awkward and juvenile sort of thing, and kept me in the dark for years. Chester, meanwhile, was actually publishing short stories in newly established postwar periodicals—*Merlin*, *Botteghe Oscure*, *Paris Review*, *Proefschrift*. It was the era of the little magazines. These, springing up in Europe, had a lustre beyond the merely contemporary: they smacked of old literary capitals, of Americans abroad (Scott and Zelda), of bistros, of Sartre and de Beauvoir, of existentialist ennui; they were as intellectually distant from my meagre desk in Pelham Bay as it was possible to be. The Scotch Tape that held my Picasso woman on the wall turned brittle; superannuated, she fell to pieces and was put in the trash. Chester in Paris was well into the beginnings of an international reputation—he was brilliantly in the world—while I, stuck in the same room where I had fussed over Mr. Emerson's assignments, was only another tormented inky cipher. I had nothing of the literary life but my trips on the bus to the Westchester Square Public Library and the changing heaps of books these occasioned.

The letters from Paris crowed. Chester made it plain that he had arrived, and that I had been left behind. He condescended, I smarted. "Death in Venice" brought him up short. Literature—its beauty and humanity—had nothing to do with the literary barometer, with ambition and rivalry and the Red Hot Center. Only the comely sentence mattered. The sentence!

> Aschenbach noted with astonishment the lad's perfect beauty. His face recalled the noblest moment of Greek sculpture—pale, with a sweet reserve, with clustering honey-colored ringlets, the brow and nose descending in one line, the winning mouth, the expression of pure and godlike serenity. Yet with all this chaste perfection of form it was of such unique personal charm that the observer thought he had never seen, either in nature or art, anything so utterly happy and consummate.

We began to talk, as we never had before, of the varieties of human attraction. He was not "naturally" homosexual, I insisted: I *knew* he was not; he knew it himself. I reminded him of his old stirrings and infatuations. I made no mention of the old rebuffs. I felt a large, earnest, and intimate freedom to say what I thought; we had between us, after all, a history of undisguised tenderness. And had he not yearned after Diana? He was not obliged, or destined, to be homosexual; he had chosen dramatic adaptation over honest appetite.

His reply was a savage bellow. The

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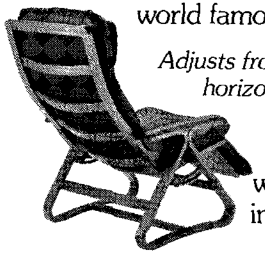

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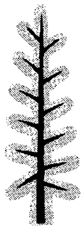

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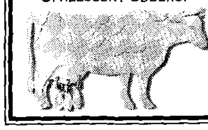

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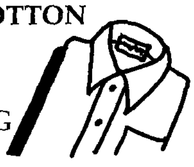

French stamps running helter-skelter on the envelope had been licked into displacement by a wild tongue and pounded down by a furious fist. He roared back at me, in capital letters, "YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT LOVE!"

He broke with me then, and I saw how I had transgressed. Privately, I took virulence to be confirmation. He was protesting too much. His rage was an admission that he had followed the path of escape rather than the promptings of his own nature. He was not what he seemed; he was an injured boy absurdly compelled to wear a yellow wig. Shame gave him the power of sham—an outrageously idiosyncratic, if illusional, negation of his heart's truth. He could, as it were, hallucinate in life as vividly as on a page of fiction; he had license now for anything.

Chester is long dead, and though I speak retrospectively about the letter that exasperated him and put an end to our friendship, there are living voices much like his own, and probably just as exasperated. They will claim I am simpleminded in theorizing that Chester's self-revulsion was the true engine of his turning from women. Gay men will know better than I, bisexual men will know better, psychologists and psychoanalysts will know better. And, yes, I know nothing about it. Or, rather, I know that no one knows anything about it: about the real sources of homosexuality. Besides, not every boy who supposes himself unattractive to girls will become a man who courts men. No doubt thousands of young men unhappy with their looks and their lives have moved on to conventionally heterosexual arrangements, including marriage. A wig is superficial: its site is on top of the head, not inside it. Proclivities are likely innate, not pasted on to accommodate circumstance. The homoerotic matrix may inhabit the neural system.

These are fair objections. But how can I surrender what I genuinely saw? I saw that Chester had once loved, and *had wanted to be loved by,* women. Believing himself radically unfit, he sought an anodyne. Homosexuality was, at least initially, a kind of literary elixir. It brought him apparitions. Who does not recall, on the dust jacket of "Other Voices, Other Rooms," the photograph of the beautiful young Truman Capote in a tattersall vest, reclining on a sofa, indolent as an odalisque, with lucent, galactic eyes? And what of those luring draughts of Paris and Morocco—brilliant Proustian scenes, North African sweeps of albino light? Anodyne; elixir; apparition. Beyond this, my understanding dims. I cannot pursue Chester into his future; I was not witness to it.

AFTER our last exchange, I never expected to hear from him again. I recognized that I had inflicted a violent hurt—though I had no accurate measure of that violence, or violation, until long afterward, when I came on "The Foot" and the "ax driven straight down the middle of my body."

But Chester had his revenge; he repaid me wound for wound. If I had intruded on his erotic turf, he, it developed, would tread on ground equally unnameable—our rivalry, or what was left of it. Nothing, in fact, was left of it. Chester was publishing, and being talked of, in Paris and New York. I was still futilely mired in my "ambitious first novel," which reached three hundred thousand words before I had the sense to give up on it. Mr. Emerson had pushed us into a race, and Chester had indisputably won.

About two years after I lectured him on love, I took the bus to the post office and mailed a short story to Italy—to *Botteghe Oscure,* at an address in Rome. It had already been submitted to *The New Yorker,* for which I had hungrily but mistakenly designed it, relying on some imitative notion of what "a *New Yorker* story" was in those days reputed to be. The story was a failure: the characters were artificial, the theme absurd. When *The New Yorker* rejected it, instead of disposing of my folly I thought, with the recklessness of envy, of Chester's dazzlements in *Botteghe Oscure.* He had matured quickly. Whereas I was still writing what I would eventually classify as juvenilia, Chester's Paris stories were exquisite; focussed and given over to high diction, they seemed the work of an old hand. They had the tone and weight of translations from this or that renowned classical European autho whose name you could not quite pu your finger on: Colette, or Gide, or the author of "Death in Venice." Thei worked and burnished openings were redolent of delectable old library books "Once, in autumn, I sat all nigh beside the immense stone wall tha surrounds the ancient cemetery of Pèr

Lachaise." Or "Our appointment was for after lunch, down the street from my house in a little formal park full of trees and flowers called the Garden of the Frog." When I reread these early stories now, they sometimes have, here and there, a poison drop of archaism—as if the nineteen-fifties had all collapsed into the very, very long ago. And I am startled to notice that we were writing then—both of us—in what from this distance begins to look like the same style: possessed, in the manner of the young, by the ravishments of other voices.

Several months went by. A letter from Paris! But Chester and I had stopped corresponding. He had cut me off and thrown me out. It was a period, I discovered later, when he was writing hundreds of letters, a number of them to new friends made at Columbia University, where, after college, he was briefly enrolled as a graduate student. When his father died and left him a little money, he escaped courses and schedules and headed for Mexico, and then on to Paris. With no constraints now, he was fashioning a nonconformist life for himself—partly out of books, but mainly inspired by the self-proclaimed expatriate nonconformists who were doing exactly the same. He had made it plain that there was no place in that life for me. Impossible, after our rupture, that I would hear from him; yet I knew no one else in Paris. I looked again at the letter. In the upper-left-hand corner, in faint green rubber-stamped print, were two intoxicating words: "*Botteghe Oscure*." The big manila envelope with my story in it, containing another big manila envelope for its return, had been addressed to Rome. This was not a big manila envelope; no manuscript was being returned. It was a thin, small letter. Why from Paris, and not from Rome? *Botteghe Oscure* had its headquarters, whatever they might be (a row of dark shops?), in Rome. Princess Marguerite Caetani, the founder, sponsor, and deep pockets of *Botteghe Oscure*, was a princess of Italy. But, ah, nobility travels glitteringly from capital to capital. Princess Caetani—it must be she—was writing not from Rome, where the season had ended, but from a grand apartment in Paris, in the grandest arrondissement of all, not far from a little formal park full of trees and flowers. She had put aside her gold-embossed lorgnette to pick up a silver-nibbed pen. A thin green sheet peeped from the thin, small envelope. I drew the paper out in a strange kind of jubilation, half regretful. It was late, nearly too late, for this glimmer of good fortune. It was years after Chester's success, though we had set out together. I had been writing seriously since the age of twenty-two, and had never yet been published; all my literary eggs, so far, were in that dubious basket of an unfinished, unfinishable novel.

I recognized the handwriting in an instant. The letter was not from the Princess. Chester was reading for the Princess, he explained: winnowing, going through the pile of awful things the mail habitually brought—the Princess sent everything over from Rome. You wouldn't believe what awful things he was obliged to slog through. Well, here was my story. It wasn't all that good, he liked a few things in it, they weren't completely awful—he would make sure the Princess got his recommendation anyhow.

Chester on Mt. Olympus, tossing crumbs. Humiliation: my story was published in *Botteghe Oscure*. He had won, he had won.

WHAT happened afterward I gathered from rumor and report. Chester left Paris in 1959. Between 1959 and 1963, he lived in New York, and so did I. We never met, spoke, or wrote. As always, he was noisily surrounded, prodding to get a rise out of people, on the lookout for adventures, upheavals, darkening mischiefs. His reviews, of books and theatre, were ubiquitous, like skywriting: you looked up, and there he was. For a while, he abandoned the wig; then he put it on again. Edmund Wilson, notorious for crusty reclusiveness, sent him a fan letter. But he was restless, and ambitious for more, especially for fame of the right sort. He wanted to be writing stories and novels. In 1960, he went off to the perilously companionable isolation of the MacDowell Colony and stumbled into a private loneliness so profound that he was beginning to populate it with phantom voices. Unable to sustain his own company, he took on the more engaging job of busybody and troublemaker, begging for attention by riling everyone in sight. In letters that have since been published (how this would have delighted him: he did nothing not for

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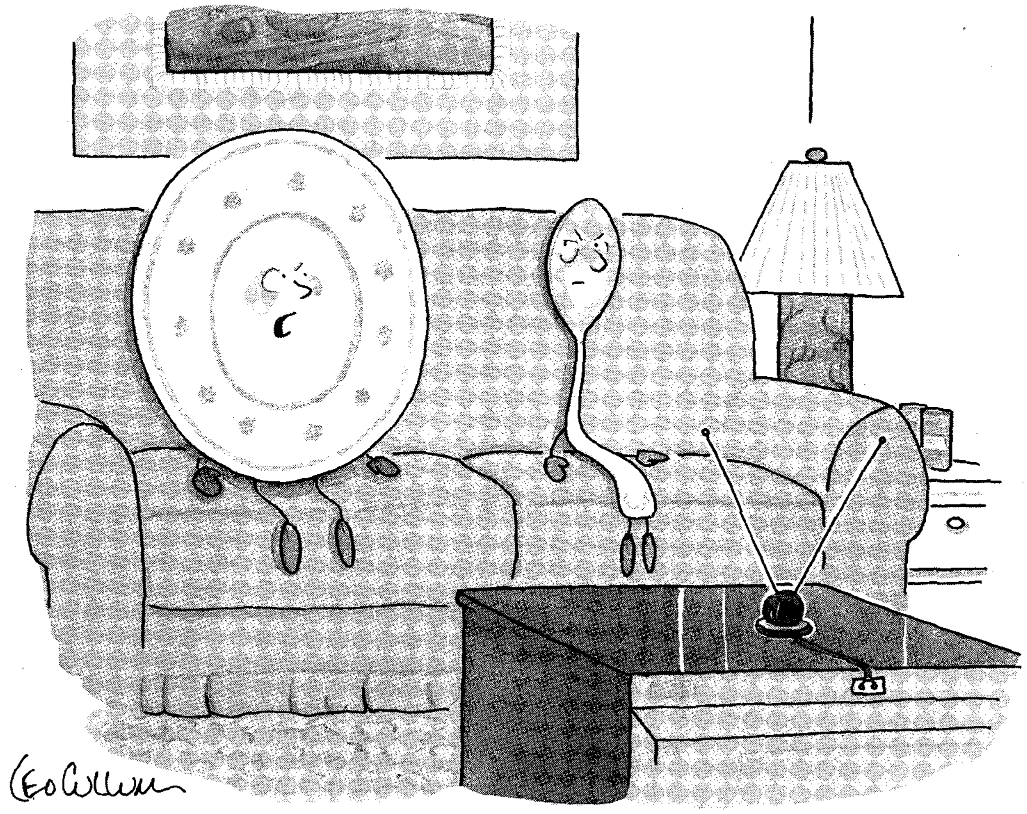

"Sometimes I'm sorry I ever ran away with you."

dissemination) he complained to a pair of friends back in New York:

> They all have cars and seem rich. Except some of the painters. They see me walking into town and wave to me as they fly by in their convertibles on their way to lakes and cookouts. They are mainly dumb. They are very square. Nobody's queer, not even me anymore. Besides I hate myself too. I can't stand it anymore not having any stable I. It is too much. Thrust into a totally new situation, here, I don't know who I am. My neighbor Hortense Powdermaker walks by and I feel some creature in me rise. I just want to scream fuck I am alfred chester who? But no one will believe me, not even me. who is writing this now? . . . And the voices in my head go on and on. As there is no me except situationally, I have to have mental conversations in order to be. . . . Ugh. It's to die. . . . WRITE TO ME WRITE TO ME WRITE TO ME WRITE TO ME WRITE TO ME AS I FADE AWAY WITH LONELINESS.

> I have had a blowout with Mme. Powdermaker at breakfast this morning and am still quivering. I come to the table, at which she, Ernst Bacon, Leon Hartl (a French painter I adore), and Panos, a Greek, sit. Morning, Powdie, say I, for I have been shaking since last night, aching to give it to her. Aching to give it to most of them in fact, this rude, ungenerous, terrified, ungiving teaparty group who preserve nothing but the surface, so illmannered and illbred, so lacking in spirit. . . . Last night I decided I was no longer going to submit, but to rebel against every act of unkindness. The colony is in an uproar. . . . First of all I have been persona non grata since last Saturday night when I danced with Gus the cook at the MacDowell version of wild party in Savidge Library. . . . Gus wanted to fuck me but I wouldn't let him because of his wife. There has been a party every day since, sometimes twice a day, to which I have been cordially uninvited by the wild young set. I don't mind. It is all like a tea party with the people made of china. But what I do mind is their hypocrisy, the extreme courtesy toward someone they can't bear: me. I also mind their bad manners, like leaving me to put away the pieces in the scrabble board, or Powdie saying yes, very snidely, yes she'd guessed I was a Russian Jew.

There followed a dustup over Chester's having asked Hortense Powdermaker for a lift in her car, which, according to Chester's account, she refused, deliberately allowing him to stand futilely in the road in the dark of a summer's night.

> It got pretty hysterical after this and the other tables as well as the kitchen staff were hysterical.
>
> She: (to Ernst Bacon) As head of the house committee, I wish you would take this matter up with this young man. I'm not obliged to be anyone's chauffeur. It is customary to wait to be offered something. Not to ask for it. You're a brash young man. You don't know anything about communal living. You have no place in this colony.

After an official dressing-down, he was asked to leave MacDowell. He was, as he put it in a telegram, "flung out." He announced that Gus, the cook, and Gus's wife were departing with him, along with Chester's two rambunctious dogs, Columbine and Skoura, who had sunk their teeth into assorted mattresses and the body parts of other residents. (He had been given special permission to bring the dogs with him to MacDowell. He had also been supplied with a new typewriter and "a full-length mirror for my yoga.") "And he is lovely," he said of himself. "I love him. He is sweet and cute. . . . O I'm so much gladder to be me than all these pathetic silly other people."

Half a decade later, he was similarly flung out of Morocco, where he had been living since 1963, invited there by Paul Bowles. A young Arab fisherman named Dris, who practiced sympathetic witchcraft and genial conning—the Larbi of "The Foot"—became his lover, factotum, and dependent. "It is traditional in Morocco," Chester remarks in a story ("Glory Hole," subtitled "Nickel Views of the Infidel in Tangier"), "to pay for sex. There are nicer, but not truer, ways of putting it. The lover gives a gift to the beloved: food, clothing, cash. The older pays the younger." It was not because of his sexual conduct that Chester was expelled from Morocco. Tangier was, one might say, a mecca for "Nazarene" homosexuals from the States, who were as officially welcome as any other dollar-bearing visitors. As far as anyone can make out, Chester's landlord complained to the authorities about the savagery of Chester's dogs. and of Chester's own furies, his fits of quarrelling with the neighbors over the racket their numerous children made. At MacDowell, he had brought in booze to supplement the bland fare in the dining room. In Tangier, he turned to pills and kif, and fell into spells of madness. Bounced out o Morocco, he fled to New York and then to London, where he was deranged enough to be tended by a psychiatric social worker. He repeatedly attempted to be allowed back into Morocco, enlisting Paul Bowles t intervene for him. Morocco remained obdurate.

In 1970, I was in Jerusalem for the first time, to read a literary paper at a conference. I had published, four years earlier, a very long "first" novel, which was really a third novel. It was sparsely reviewed, and it dropped, as first novels are wont to do, into a ready oblivion. In Jerusalem, though, I was surprised by a fleeting celebrity: my essay—many thousands of words, which had taken nearly two hours to deliver—was reprinted almost in its entirety, along with my picture, in the weekend book section of the English-language Jerusalem *Post*. All this I saw as fortuitous and happy bait.

Chester was now living in Jerusalem. The moment I arrived in Israel, I tried to find him. I had been given the address of a poet who might know how to reach him, but the poet was himself inaccessible—he was sick and in the hospital. I waited for Chester to come to me. I felt hugely *there;* you couldn't miss me. The *Post* had published, gratuitously, the biggest "personals" ad imaginable. Every day, I expected Chester's telephone call. It was now fourteen years since he had winnowed on behalf of the Princess, and more than two decades since I had last looked into his bleached and lashless eyes. I longed for a reunion; I thought of him with all the old baby tenderness. I wanted to be forgiven, and to forgive. As I contemplated the journey to Israel, my secret, nearly single-minded hope was to track him down. In New York, his reputation had dwindled; his name was no longer scrawled across the sky. An episodic "experimental" novel, "The Exquisite Corpse" (horrific phantasmagoria bathed in picture-book prose that Chester himself, in a letter, called "delicious"), appearing three years before, had left no mark. Even rumors of Chester's ravels had eluded me: I had heard nothing about the life in Morocco, or about his meanderings in Spain and Greece and Sicily; I had no idea of any of it. Jealousy, of Chester or anyone, had long ago burned itself out. It was n emotion I could not recognize in myself. I was clear of it—cured. The mber deposited on the cold hearth of Mr. Emerson's ancient conflagration was of a different nature altogether: all it love's cinder. It lay there, black nd gray, of a certain remembered onfiguration, not yet disintegrated. Chester did not turn up to collect it. He did not turn up at all. He was

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already dead, or dying, or close to dying—perhaps even while I was walking the curved and flowering streets of Jerusalem, searching for the ailing poet's house, the poet who was to supply the clue to Chester's whereabouts.

Why had Chester come to Jerusalem? In 1967, back in Paris, he put on a new English fedora over his now exposed and glossy scalp, and plunged into the byways of the Marais to seek out a synagogue. Not since his boyhood in the yeshiva had he approached the Hebrew liturgy. Despite this singular visit, his habits continued unrestrained and impenitent. He drank vodka and bourbon and cognac by the bottle, smoked kif and hashish, took barbiturates and tranquillizers, and was unrelentingly, profoundly, mercilessly unhappy.

In Jerusalem, he set to work on a travel report, never published, called "Letter from the Wandering Jew"—a record, really, of personal affronts, most of them provoked by loneliness in quest of sensationalism. In it he purports to explain why he left Europe for Israel. "No roads lead to Israel," the manuscript begins. A parenthesis about the opening of a "sex aids" shop in Tel Aviv follows. And then:

> Why I came is a very long story, a couple of thousand years long, I suppose. I'd been living unhappily in France since May, I and my two dogs Momzer [Hebrew for "bastard"] and Towzer who are Arabs, having been born in Morocco. The idea of Israel had been with me for some time, a kind of latent half-hearted hope that there was a place on this planet where people who had suffered had come together to shelter each other from pain and persecution: a place of lovingkindness. Besides, does a Jew ever stop being a Jew? Especially one like me whose parents had fled the Russian pogroms for the subtler barbarisms of New York? Yiddish was as much my first language as English, and Hebrew came soon after, for [since I was his] youngest and belated child, my father was determined that at least one of his sons would be a good Jew.

This faintly sentimental opening (not counting the sex-shop parenthesis) misrepresents. The rest is bitter stuff, bitter against father and mother, against going to school, against childhood and children, against teachers and rabbis and restaurants and waiters, against God ("that pig called Jehovah"), against France and the French, against Arab hotels and Jewish hotels, against Arabs, against Jews, against traffic noise, even against the scenery. Once again, there are the rows over the dogs, flocks of urchins teasing, exasperated neighbors, bewildered policemen. There are forays after eccentric houses to rent; unreasonable landlords; opportunistic taxi-drivers. There are rages and aggression and digression and jokes in the mode of sarcasm and jokes in the mode of nihilism. Satire wears out and reverts to snideness, and snideness to open fury. Eventually, vodka and Nembutal and little blue Israeli tranquillizers take charge of the language: now gripping, now banal; now thrilling, now deteriorated; now manic, now shocking. At moments, it is no more than pretty, a make-do remnant of what was once a literary style:

> The neighborhood was quiet, the house pleasant and sunny; the dogs had a great garden to run around in and there was a pack of ferocious Airedales next door to bark at all the time. Flowers grew all through the winter—roses, narcissi, pansies, and lots of others whose names I don't know—and when spring came, virtually on the heels of [winter], the roof of the house went absolutely crazy with those gorgeous Mediterranean lilacs that have hardly any smell but almost make up for it by the tidal madness of their bloom.

"Letter from the Wandering Jew" was Chester's last performance. A paranoid document, it is not without self-understanding. The Promised Land is always over the crest of the hill, and then, when you have surmounted the hill and stepped into the lovely garden on the other side, you look around and in ten minutes discover that everything has been corrupted. The truth is that the traveller himself, arriving, is the corrupter. Chester, in his last words, fathomed all this to the lees:

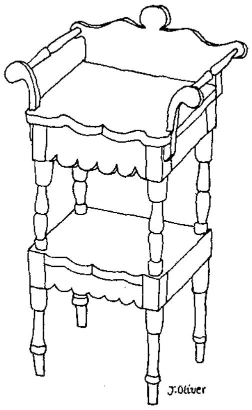
> Aren't you tired of listening to me? I am. If I had any tears left, I would cry myself to sleep each night. But I haven't, so I don't. Besides, it is morning that comes twisting and torturing my spirit, not nights of dreamless sleep. Morning, another day. I open the shutters and am assailed by the long day unstretching itself like a hideous snake. Does hope spring eternal? Is there still within me the inane dream that somewhere, sometime, will be better?
>
> A few wild poppies are blooming in my littered weedy garden. When I walk out with the dogs I see the poppies opening here and there among the weeds, and here and there a few sickly wilting narcissi. Surely death is no dream . . . and that being the case, there is then in truth a homeland, a nowhere, a notime, noiseless and peaceful, the ultimate utopia, the eternal freedom, the end to all hunting for goodness and home.

Chester wrote these sad cadences, I learned afterward, less than a block from my Jerusalem hotel. He never looked for me; I never found him. I never saw him alive again. (His dogs, I heard, were discovered locked in a closet, ravenous.)

He lives in my mind, a brilliant boy in a wig.

VERY few are familiar with Chester's work or name nowadays—not even bookish people of his own generation. He counts, I suppose, as a "neglected" writer—or perhaps, more to the point, as a minor one. To be able to say what a minor writer is—if it could be done at all—would bring us a little nearer to defining a culture. The tone of a culture cannot depend only on the occasional genius, or the illusion of one; the prevailing temper of a society and a time is situated in its minor voices, in their variegated chorus, but, above all, in the certainty of their collective presence. There can be no major work, in fact, without the screen, or ground, of lesser artists against whom the major figure is illuminated. Or put it that minor writers are the armature onto which the clay of greatness is thrown, pressed, prodded. If we looked to see who headed the best-seller list the year "The Golden Bowl" came out, the likelihood is that not a single name or title would be recognizable. Minor writers are mainly dead writers who do not rise again, who depend on research projects—often on behalf of this ideology or that movement—to dig up their forgotten influence. Minor writers are the objects of literary scholarship: who if not the scholars will creep through archives in search of the most popular novelists of 1904?

Quantity is not irrelevant. A minor writer may own an electrifying gift, but a trickle of work generally reduces power. In the absence of a surrounding forest of similar evidences, one book, no matter how striking, will tend to diminish even an extraordinary per to minor status. There are, to be sure certain blazing exceptions—think, for example, of "Wuthering Heights," a solo masterwork that descends to u unaccompanied but consummate. By and large, though, abundance counts. Balzac is Balzac because of the vast, thick row of novel after novel, shelf upon shelf. Imagine Balzac as the author only of "Lost Illusions," say, a remarkable work in itself. Or imagine James as having written "The Golden Bowl" and nothing else. If "Lost Illusions" were to stand alone, if "The Golden Bowl" were to stand alone, if there were no others, would Balzac be Balzac and James James?



Sectarianism also touches on minorness. There is, of course, nothing in the human predicament which is truly sectarian, parochial, narrow, foreign, of "special" or "limited" or "minority" interest; all subjects are universal. That is the convenience—for writers, anyhow—of monotheism, which, envisioning one Creator, posits the unity of humankind. Trollope, writing about nineteenth-century small-town parish politics, exactly describes my local synagogue and, no doubt, an ashram along the Ganges. All "parochialisms" are inclusive. Sholem Aleichem's, Jane Austen's, Faulkner's, García Márquez's villages have a census of millions. By sectarianism, for want of a better term, I intend something like monomania—which is different from obsessiveness. Geniuses are obsessive: Kafka is obsessive, Melville is obsessive. Obsessiveness belongs to ultimate meaning; it is a category of metaphysics. But a minor writer will show you a barroom, or a murder victim, or a sexual occasion, relentlessly, monomaniacally. Nothing displays minorness so much as the "genre" novel, however brilliantly turned out, whether it is a Western or a detective story or "Story of O," even when it is being deliberately parodied as a postmodernist conceit.

Yet minor status is not always the same as oblivion. A delectable preciousness (not inevitably a pejorative, if you consider Max Beerbohm), or a calculated smallness, or an unstoppable scheme of idiosyncrasy, comic or other—or simply the persnickety insistence on *being* minor—can claim permanence as easily as the more capacious qualities of a Proust or a Joyce. The names of such self-circumscribed indelibles rush in: Christina Rossetti, Edward Lear, and W. S. Gilbert out of the past, and, near our own period, Ronald Firbank, Ivy Compton-Burnett, Edward Dahlberg, S. J. Perelman, James Thurber. Perhaps Beerbohm above all. (There are a handful more among the living.) Minor art is incontrovertibly art, and minor artists, like major ones, can live on and on. Who can tell if Alfred Chester—whose fiction and essays are currently tunnelling out into the world again via new editions—will carry on among the minor who are designed to survive or among those others who will be lost because, beyond their given moment, they speak to no one?

The question leads once more to sectarianism and its dooms. It may be that Chester is a sectarian writer in a mode far subtler than genre writing (he once published a pornographic novel under a pseudonym, but let that pass) or monomania. Homosexual life, insofar as he made it his subject, was never a one-note monody for Chester: what moved him was the loneliness and the longing, not the mechanics. His sectarianism, if I am on the right track, took the form of what is sometimes called, unkindly and imprecisely, ventriloquism. It is a romantic, even a sentimental, vice that only unusually talented writers can excel at: the vice, to say it quickly, of excessive love of literature—of the *sound* of certain literatures. Ventriloquist writers reject what they have in common with their time and place, including ordinary talk, and are so permeated with the redolence of Elsewhere that their work, even if it is naturally robust, is plagued by wistfulness. I am not speaking of nostalgia alone, the desire to revisit old scenes and old moods. Nor am I speaking of the concerns of "mandarin" writers—those who are pointedly out of tune with the vernacular, who heighten and burnish language in order to pry out of it judgments and ironies beyond the imagination of the colloquial. Ventriloquist writers may or may not be nostalgic, they may or may not be drawn to the mandarin voice. What ventriloquist writers want is to live inside *other literatures.*

Chester, I believe, was one of these. It made him seem a poseur to some, a madman to others; and he was prob-

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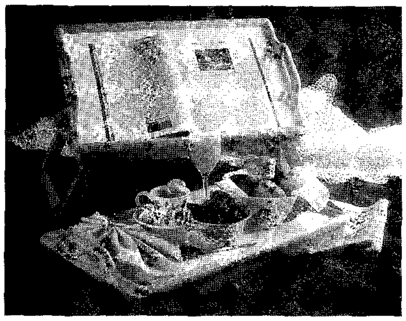

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ably a little of both. He drove himself from continent to continent, trying out the Moroccan sunlight as he had read of it, Malcolm Cowley's Paris as the garden of liberating "exile," the isles of Greece for the poetry of the words, Jerusalem for the eternal dream. Literature was a costume—or, at any rate, a garment. He hardly ever went naked. He saw landscapes and cities through a veil of bookish imaginings. Inexorably, they failed him. His Greek island had unworkable plumbing. Jerusalem had traffic noise. Paris turned out to be exile in earnest. The Moroccan sunlight came through as promised, but so did human nature. Wherever he ran, the nimbus grew tattered, there were quotidian holes in the literary gauze.

This is not to say that Chester was not an original, or that he had a secondhand imagination. Who is more original than a man who fears he is not there? "And I would watch myself, mistrustful of my presence . . . *I want to be real*," he wrote in an early story. (Its title, "As I Was Going Up the Stair," echoes the nursery chant "I met a man who wasn't there.") For the tormented who blind themselves before mirrors, a wash of hallucination will fill the screen of sight. Woody Allen's Zelig falls into old newsreels, his Kugelmass into a chapter of "Madame Bovary." Chester allowed himself to become, or to struggle to become, if not a character in fiction then someone who tilted at life in order to transmogrify it into fiction. He is remembered now less as the vividly endowed writer he was born to be than as an eccentric ruin in the comical or sorrowing anecdotes of a tiny circle of aging scribblers.

Most of the writers who on occasion reminisce about Chester have by now lived long enough to confirm their own minor status. If he was in a gladiatorial contest, and not only from the perspective of Mr. Emerson's adolescent amphitheatre but with all his literary generation, then it is clear that Chester has lost. In 1962, commenting on an early collection of short stories by John Updike, he was caustic and flashy: "A God who has allowed a writer to lavish such craft upon these worthless tales is capable of anything." A reviewer's callow mistake, yes. Updike has gone from augmentation to augmentation, and nobody can so much as recognize Chester's name. It is common enough that immediately after writers die their reputations plummet into ferocious eclipse: all at once, and unaccountably, a formerly zealous constituency will stop reading and teaching and talking about the books that only a short while before were objects of excitement and gossip. It is as if for writers vengeful mortality erases not only the woman or the man but the page, the paragraph, the sentence—pages, paragraphs, and sentences honed and furbished precisely in order to spite mortality. Writers, major or minor, may covet fame, but what they really *work* for is that transient little daily illusion—phrase by phrase, comma after comma—of the stay against erasure.

I sometimes try to imagine Chester alive, my own age (well, a few months younger), still ambitiously turning out novels, stories, essays. No white hair for Chester: he would be perfectly bald, and, given his seniority, perfectly undistinguished by his baldness. I see him as tamed, though not restrained; a practiced intellectual by now; industrious; all craziness spent. Instead of those barbaric dogs, he owns a pair of civilized cats. If I cannot untangle the sex life of his later years, I also know that it is none of my business. (In "The Foot" he speaks glancingly of having first had sexual relations with a woman at thirty-seven.) His ambition, industry, and cantankerous wit have brought him a quizzical new celebrity; he is often on television. In degree of attention-getting he is somewhere between Norman Mailer and Allen Ginsberg, though less political than either. He avoids old friends, or, if not, he anyhow avoids me; my visits with him take place in front of the television set. There he is, talking speedy Brooklynese, on a literary panel with Joyce Carol Oates and E. L. Doctorow.

I look into the bright tube at those small, suffering, dangerous eyes under the shining scalp and think: *You've won, Chester, you've won.*

—CYNTHIA OZICK

•

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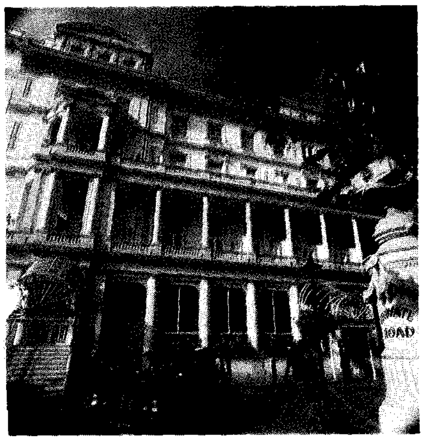

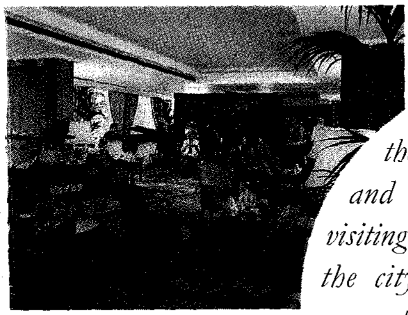

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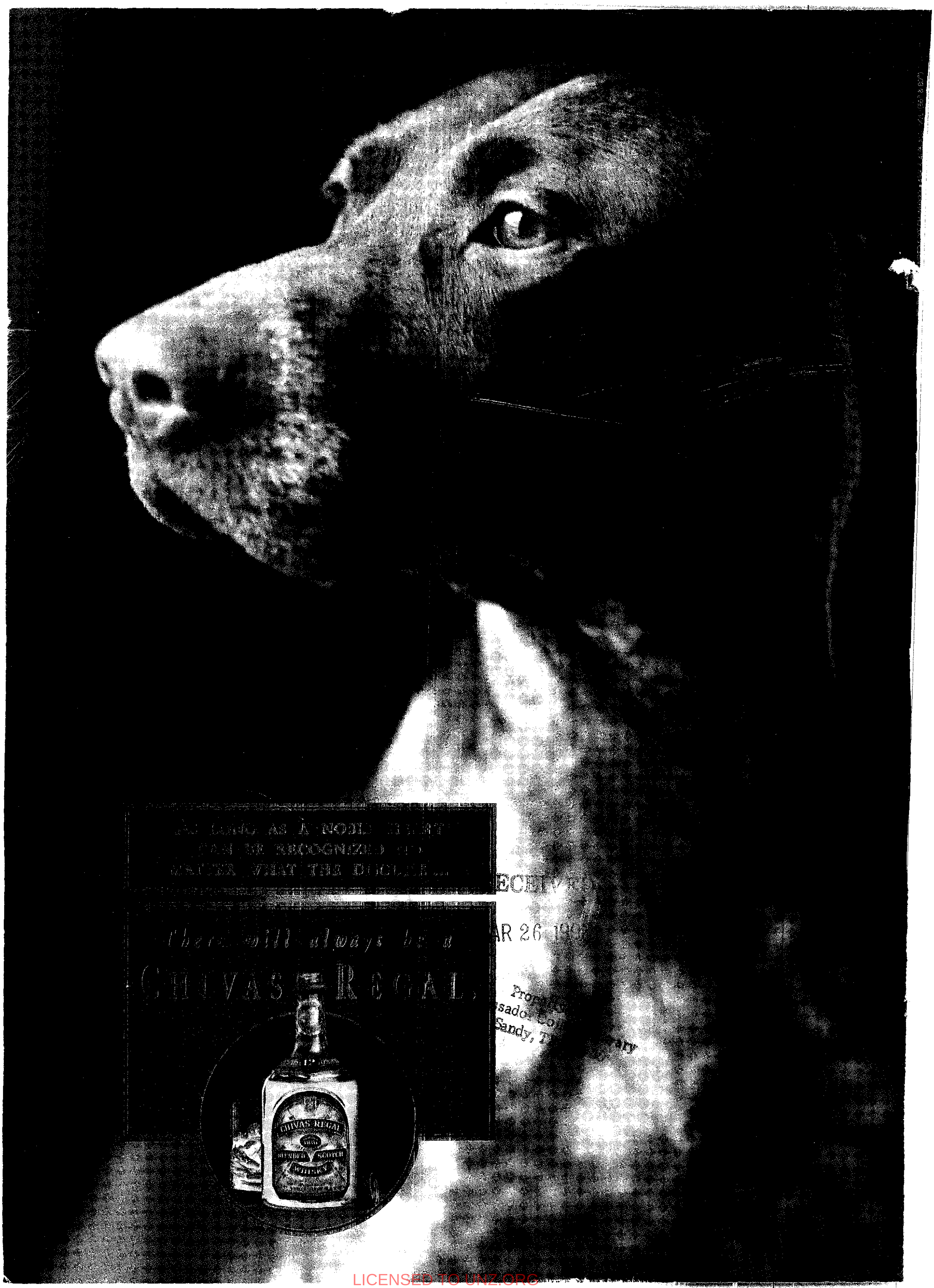
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